[For the secular activities of the dabtara such as chorister, poet, dancer, herbologist, scribe, and wizard, see also categories 212, 756, 754, 759, 538, 533, and 535.]

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

423 Such types of land tenure arose in the past when a king awarded land for personal service, or in gratitude, as "gult" land, without specifying the conditions under which such land might pass to the heirs of the recipient.

423 794 Land donated to the church, in areas far from a monastery or parish that could easily administer it, sometimes belong in this category. In gratitude for victory, a king would sometimes establish ecclesiastical fiefs, "rim", for the support of officiating priests and boy deacons. The most famous endowment of this kind occurred in 1270 A.D., when archbishop Täklä Haymanot received 1/3 of the land of Abyssinia from the "Solomonic Dynasty" he had helped to restore. The archbishop immediately founded monasteries to administer the property and to supervise the "gabbar on it. Priests and monks since then have served in functions similar to chaplains, and have carried the "tabot" representing the sacred ark, into battles, much like the priests of the ancient Israelites. Endowments have continued to add land to the church, "mäsqäl märet" (lit. lands of the cross), and a priest is usually sent to act as local administrator, "aläqa" (lit, chief). He also supervises the functioning of a church built on land not given to the church, and often acts as if the surrounding land were "gult" land belonging to the church.

793

The moral power of the church in many localities is so strong that the borderlines between "rest" and "gult" may become hazy. Aging persons often try to

423 794 donate some plots to the church as "s̄ānonanya", to have masses read for their souls after their deaths. Widows, who often take vows as nuns, try to endow the church if they can. Sometimes, "gultēnnas" threatened with expropriation, sought the protection of the church, so that they could remain on their lands. Sometimes parish priests 423 793 practice nepotism by inviting their nephews or other kinsmen to settle on endowed land surrounding the parish church, without paying rent or performing heavy labors. In return, this arrangement serves the local priests as life insurance and income-insurance, for they will always be certain of supplies of produce, beer, meat, incense, clothing, etc., from their grateful kinfolk, for themselves and their offspring.

The local priest then also acts as patron of his kinfolk against the regional administration, interceding for them when they become involved in litigation, acts as their "guarantor" ("was") when they apply for jobs or seek more land from the governor or neighboring landlord. This nepotism actually seems on the increase, since the present emperor abrogated the feudal rights of all church lands in 1942 (though reinstituting some in exchange for services such as education, a few years later). Now that the church has lost the right to charge feudal rent, parish priests are more eager than ever to have kinfolk settle around them, to avoid dependence on payment from parents whose boys are enrolled in the church school.

b) Parish Organization.

423
795 In many districts of the oldAmhara provinces, the church has owned much feudal land (it was given 1/3 of the land in the 13th century). Endowments from the wills of pious persons have been adding to this.

This land, which is regarded as "rest", freehold real estate, in the traditional land tenure, is administered in divisions,called "dəbber", that somewhat resemble medieaval European parishes. The population of such an area, which directly or indirectly supports the local church, through tithes, rents, services, periodic supplies, memorial gifts, etc., refers to "ənd dəbber agər" (lit. one particular countryside) as its home district; much as an Italian refers to "mi paese".

793 The priests attached to this church (often for long periods) usually attempt to create a residential kinship unit for themselves, similar to the residential hamlets of freehold families, inviting their nephews and other young-married kin, both patrilineal and matrilineal, to settle near the church. A priest thus closely surrounded by kin becomes the local patriarch, and his personal economic future, as well as his leadership are assured. The priest locally appointed by higher church authorities ato act as administrator is the sacristan, "gəbəz", or "qəs"(priest) gobəz", who is respectfully addressed and referred to as "aläqa" (lit. chief).

793
795 The number of clergy attached to an old-established, local church, often includes, besides the "gobəz"

793 795 priest, seven other priests of varying seniority, 12 deacons, a head deacon, a chamberlain, at least a dozen "däbtära" chorister-scribes, several aged monks, and elderly widows who have taken vows as nuns. The latter do much of the baking and beer-brewing for the local church. But if a poor church, "gätär" is founded by and dependent on a landholding kin group not on church land, it may have merely two priests and 3 deacons, so that on its special saint's day dabtara have to be invited from other churches, to perform the proper chants, dances, and chorus of chanting.

c) Personnel of the Church Institution, and Church Education.

793 The ordinary parish priest, "qäs" does not need to be verylearned or even very ascetic, but he is expected to live a holy life in accordance with all the rules of the church, observe even minor fasts, and to be married in the eucharistic, "qurbän" marriage. He is identified by the headcovering which he wears even in church, consisting of thin muslin wrapped around a cylindrical white cap. If his wife dies, he cannot marry again, and in order to continue functioning as a priest, he is expected to take monastic vows, putting on the "qob"(white cap) of the monk, without muslin turban.

One of the duties of the priest is to perform the eucharist on Sunday for persons considered living a Christian life, i.e. married in church (a minority).He

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

793 also performs masses on specific occasions, including memorials and holy days, chants part of the liturgy, reads (but usually does not know how to translate) biblical portions from both New and Old Testament in the Geez language. Before performing the eucharist, the officiating priest is expected to abstain from sexual intercourse for 1 to 3 days, for this is regarded as polluting him (an Old Testament survival). Before such occasions he takes care to sleep on the mudbench of his hut, rather than on his "alga" bed. This procedure is followed Saturday night, before a baby's baptism, before giving ritual ablution to the dying, etc. He is also expected to wash his body before giving the eucharist (but in the dry season this is often overlooked).

783

A learned priest, more scholarly than the parish administrator or guardian of his flock, is given the special title "mämhër" (roughly, "professor"). He is usually an expert on the hymn book "degwa", and is employed in teaching it to upper grades in church school. When he becomes a monk, he is oftenappointed to "abbatachen" (lit. our father), abbot of a monastery, where his mild disposition enables him to keep the peace among hotheaded, ambitious monks, some of whom regard monasticism as a career. If the "mamher" continues to advance his knowledge of church literature and history and legends (e.g. the life of the saints), he receives the title "liq". He is usually one of the few Amhara who really know and understand Geez well, including the subtle shades of meaning of the many diverse grammatical forms;

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198

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

793 and he may also know grammatical Amharic, which has been
798 mastered by only a few hundred contemporary Amhara (including the present emperor). This grammar is called "sowasso", and contains subtle factitives, frequentatives, etc.

793 In the higher clergy of church administration, a combination of some scholarly accomplishment and political astuteness is necessary. This next higher title is "liqä kahenät" (lit. head ecclesiastic). Given a temporal bishop's territory, he is named "papas" (evidently a Greek derivation); or, if his new post is within the spiritual, monastic system, "qomos", who "blesses the cap of the monk" (i.e. can accept and supervise monastic vows of lower-status ecclesiasts). This high clergy is usually found at provincial capitals or nearby monasteries.

Above this level is the very highest leadership of the church, several "liqä papas", archbishops, of noble ancestry, who are in line for the position of head of monasteries and temporal church lands and properties, the "echäge". This was traditionally the highest Abyssinian church officer (Amhara or Tigre). Until 1948, his only superior, the "Abuna" (Patriarch), was a foreigner, usually an Egyptian Copt sent from Alexandria. In 1948, when this tie was severed, Echäge Basilios became almost automatically the first native Abuna of Ethiopia. A younger, somewhat more modern-minded element in the high clergy is headed at present by Bishop (Papas) Theophilos, who may be next in line for the highest office.

794 Local personnel in the parish church included boys from 10 to 15, who are usually more reliable church students, dressed in fine church garments, with good voices and the ability to memorize liturgy. They carry the cross and other utensils in parade, and act as ritual aides in many capacities. They are called "diyakon" (deacon). When they reach puberty, indicated as soon as their voices break and they become awkward adolescents, the possibility of sexual involvement automatically cancels their position (and the gifts from the priests).

Because of the sacerdotal emphasis, worship is performed in a temple atmosphere, churches are open only during services, and there is no preaching. Thus church officials are absent from the building most of the time, leaving the key to the heavy wooden door in charge of a semi-lay caretaker.

793 He is often a däbtära, who can be regarded as semi-clergy, though he has neither ecclesiastical recognition nor tenure of office. Yet his function in the church, as scribe, translator of Geez to Amharic, chorister of devotional poetry ("qëné"), religious poet, herbologist and physician of sorts, writer of amulets, etc., renders his participation as essential to the formal clergy as to the common people.

He must have a good voice capable of endurance, ecstatic pitch, rythm and melody. He must be more intelligent and learned than the priest, so that he can understand and explain and translate what he reads in Geez and Amharic. He has no salary and no right to the tithe, but the priest may allocate a portion to him. Often

Often
●793 most of his income is derived from writing "ketāb", amu-
[789] lets on goatskin parchment, worn by ailing persons on their neck-cord, or by women, in leather containers fastened to belt straps around the waist. The priest do forbid this amulet-writing activity, which is sometimes (not without reason) suspect not only of "white" magic, but also black magic. Yet the priests ignore and overlook this, as they have done for centuries, perhaps because in this way they obtain the "dabtara's" other services free of cost.

The däbtära is often feared by the common people because of his power, both medical and supernatural. In recent years, with the suppression of the "täṅkway" witch-doctor, the clientele of the debtara has actually increased, for now there is no one but the dabtara to exorcise "buda" (magic hyena, werewolf) possession, to protect from the evil eye, or to curse and capture thieves, Moreover, it is respectable to go to the däbtära, who operates in the shadow of the church, who associates with holy priests and even drinks beer with them at feasts. No gossip can attach to a man seen entering the hut of the dabtara, for his errand may be decent and even sacred.

[66] Most däbtära reap full benefits from the awe in which they are held. They even transgress etiquette when it suits their purposes. If uninvited at a wedding or other festivity, they often "crash" the party, and expect to be and are given seats of honor and the choicest food and mead.

793 Parish priests, (unlike mämhër scholars) are also
[66] not bashful about demanding their due (produce tithe, sheep, honey, even cash) from their tenants of church land. Sardonic peasant humor expresses this in the proverb:

[539] "The bashful priest,
the blind donkey,
(are one)" . (i.e. both would be helpless and starve to death).

532 Among artisans who do specialist work for the
346 church is the artist of church paintings, usually highly colorful and realistic scenes from the suffering of the saints, in morbid and gory detail; the beauties of heaven and the trinity; the horrors of hell ruled by a chained, soul-munching Satan; etc. These religious and semi-religious story illustrations and legends are painted on canvas and then attached to the inside of church walls.

874 Church students are usually boys 10 years or over (never girls), who at first learn the Geez-Amharid alphabet, reading Geez without translating, beginning with the Epistle of the Apostle John. They are taught by rote, memorizing by chanting the portions out loud. There is very little writing in the early grades, and experimentation is traditionally discouraged, for fear that the boys might use their new-won learning to write magic amulets. Before examinations, church studetns stimulate
874 their mental processes by eating the leaf of a Datura
276 weed resembling a Jimson weed called "astänager" (lit. to stimulate talk) which is also used by däbtära in exor-

792 believers, but as quick in anger when a human face disturbs their solitude. Legends tell of hermits who, receiving a "call", returned to the temporal world as prophets and leaders of men. But this is regarded as rare. During their lifetime the hermits are held in awe, and even after their death they are believed to haunt their earthy cave-ledges, so that passers-by talk in whispers only, and fear to come too close.

(d) Utensils of the Church.

793 292 The headgear of the priests, "mäṭämṭämiya", is a turban-like affair, basically a white muslin wrapped around the head or the cylindrical cap ("qob"). Monks wear the "qob" without the muslin, and, in many monasteries, used to dye their"qob" as well as their robes [827] yellow. In recent years the yellow color is falling into disuse, and white--believed to be the color of mourning for the passing of Christ, is worn alternately with black caps and capes. Black is evidently due to acculturation. It first entered in the form of imported chintz capes for the bishops and upper clergy in the time of Menelik II, and has spread, due to the Italian occupation.

Like noblemen, middle and higher clergy wear the kaba, the heavy , woolen, sleeveless cape, and carry an especially good "ṭchera" (flyswitch) of guresa-monkey hair. Priests wear the narrow white jodphurs at all times,

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

773 292 beneath kneelength shirt ("qämis") and shamma; often they wear sandals. They usually let a full beard grow as richly as it will. Another private symbol of priestly nobility is an abbreviated "maqomya" leaning staff, shorter, without crutch, topped by an ivory knob and equipped as a walking stick, called "sände kahanat", with an iron point at the bottom. [293]

In church parades, priests and deacons add colorfully embroidered garments of imported and embroidered velvet, rayon, silk, brocade, etc., often cut like the ancient leopard-skin in sleeveless capes which hang from the shoulders over front and back. If of domestic origin, the holy day garments are dyed black or red. Embroidery is of gold or silver thread, and sometimes includes gold or silver filigree plates in geometric patterns (e.g.the sun). On such occasions the ordinary sun umbrella ("jantela") of reeds gives way to a colorful umbrella of imported cloth, in which red and gold predominate. It is now often attached to the ribs of a modern umbrella. The black cape ("kaba") is held across the chest with a metal (often silver) clasp or chain. [293]

293 778 On such holy day parades, clergy and upper-class persons married in a eucharistic ceremony ("qurban"), wear the metal crown, "akiil". This is one of the most valuable of each church's possessions, always locked in the church when not in use, usually donated by noble sponsors. They are usually made of silver, or at least of brass, and the older more traditiona ones are shaped in tiered stories of circles narrowing toward the top

796 ship, perform the "segdat" (prostration) many times. This signifies the climax of lenten suffering. Toward evening, when Christ is presumed to have died on the cross, the pious are of good cheer, for He has descended to purgatory, has tied the devil hand and foot, and has liberated all the souls to paradise.

796 At earliest dawn Saturday morning, about 5:30,
793 priests and deacons put on their best garments, including "kapa" (cape) and "lämd", carry their colorful sun umbrellas as if in procession, and pass through the streets with parade cross, bell, incense burners, and armsful of yellow-green palm strips called "qetäma". They stop before every house or hut, ringing the bell. The sleepy owner answering the call is given the reed to wind flat around his forehead, and he will wear it all day. The priest sings out: "Oh, master, Jesus Christ has been found! The devil is chained!". In appreciation of the good news, the head of the house gives the priest some money, and receives a blessing in return. This ceremonial interchange is called "Gebra salam" (serving the greeting).

796 Sometime before midnight, the church services begin, with alternately mournful and hopeful liturgy. When the night is about to end, at cockcrow Sunday morning (about 4 A.M.) the resurrection, ("tensaē") is loudly declared amidst shouting and ringing of bells.
[263] The pious now break fast with crushed linseed ("talba") mixed with honey, and pronounce the blessing of having been permitted to reach this day. All rush out of the

831 run to women, carrying ferns (symbolic of the vulva), and tease them with shouts of "ems anqetqet" (quivering vulva).

Polite references to sexual matters usually employ biblical terminology, requiring at least some formal, traditional education. They include such terms, wholly or partly from the old Geez language still used in liturgy, as "abalä zär" (lit. master of the seed) for male genital organs in a generic sense; "bellet" (lit. divisions) for differences between male and female sex; "akalat" (lit. part of body) for male and female, or "afärat sega" (lit. flesh of modesty). [793 831] Coptic priests are not supposed to indulge in sexual intercourse even with their wives the night before they are to officiate in church, and they therefore avoid sleeping on the same "alga" (bedstead) that night.

834 Modesty of body exposure, particularly of women, is the general pattern, though children may be barely clothed in ragged shifts leaving much skin bare (see life cycle, etc.). In fact, deliberate exposure of the body is regarded as a sign of madness, and this is the popular reaction to Western pictures of "bathing beauties" in swim suits. When bathing, persons will join members of their own sex and go to secluded places in the river. On the feast day of Temqät, (Epiphany), some rustic men strip and swim in the pool blessed by the priests, but women do not. Breasts may be visible during nursing, but if there are strangers around, they will be covered to prevent any possible evil eye from drying them up.

832 Love magic is widely and strongly believed in, particularly since it is supplied by the quasi-church functionary, the däbtära scribe. He is first called upon to write amulets, which are still respectable and, can be worn in outwardly visible containers, by women, for no one can know that the amulet is not directed against the devil. But the magic activities of the däbtära, secretly, go far beyond that.

578 In the new courts established by the central government in
689 the provincial towns, the term "kayla" is regarded as an insult and can be prosecuted legally. The proper, legal term is "seratanna" (lit. workman).

326 How can one explain this strong syndrome: ironsmith - buda -
754 Falasha, which still dominates the Amhara mind? It is interesting
563 that silversmiths are less feared than ironsmiths, are more respected and (perhaps in psychological consequence) are regarded as less hateful and vengeful; (they are also less feared for they work indoors, where they can "see" less). Furthermore, although Falashas in their own society are not ashamed of their ironsmith trade, the Amhara project their own despising of this manual craft onto the Falashas and believe that Falasha ironsmiths, ashamed to be seen working at such lowly work, "fasten" on passersby with their buda eyes.

Perhaps at the basis of this syndrome lies the idea that a skilled craft, existing within the technologically primitive Amhara society, must be the result of association with evil forces
[[71]] of the supernatural. This has been the pattern regarding ironsmiths in parts of the Middle East, Africa and ancient Europe. Among the Amhara Copts of Abyssinia, the idea that these ironsmiths are also "deniers of Jesus Christ", yet have an "education" of their own, above the "pagans" makes them doubly dangerous. Added to this is a projection of their own pattern of fears and hates.

e. "Buda" doctors past and present

756 While the aforementioned dabtara is the most commonly
793 called doctor of buda disease, sometimes, especially in urban areas, the Coptic priest himself is called in.

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

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Church at Abo, Baressa gorge

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778
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Monk and deacon receiving offerings [Facing p. 170]

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

house are the raisins from which the wine is made, and a machine for pressing. In this same house the blessed bread is made which is given away on Saturdays and Sundays and feast days; and on great feasts, such as Christmas, Easter, Our Lady of August, etc., they carry this bread of the sacrament with a pallium,[1] bell, and cross devoutly. Before they enter the church with it they go round the church by the circuit like a cloister; when it is not a feast they enter the church at once and without the pallium. On a Saturday before Ascension these friars made a procession; and from being in a new country it seemed to us very good, and they did it in this way. They took crosses, and the altar stone covered with a silk cloth, a friar carried it on his head, which was also covered with the said cloths; and they carried books and bells, and thuribles, and holy water; and all went chaunting to some millet fields: there they made their devotions and cries after the fashion of litanies, and with this procession they returned to the monastery. We asked why they did that, and they said that the animals ate their millet, and so they went to pour out holy water and pray God to drive them out. In this country he that says the mass has no other difference from the deacon and sub-deacon in his vestments than a long stole with an opening in the middle to allow the head to pass through; before and behind it reaches to the ground. The friars say mass with hair on their heads; the priests do not wear hair, and are shaven and so say mass. Also, both friars and priests say mass barefooted, nobody enters the church with his feet shod, and they allege for this what God said to Moses: "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for thou art on holy ground."

[1] Under a canopy.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

monastery, most of them old men of great age, and as dry as wood; very few young men. This monastery is entirely surrounded by a wall, and this wall is closed with two gates, which are always locked.

CAP. XIV.—*How the monastery of Bisan is the head of six monasteries, of the number of the brothers, and ornaments, of the "castar"[1] which they do to Philip, whom they call a Saint.*

This monastery is the head of six monasteries, which are around it in these mountains; the furthest off is at a distance of three leagues from it, and all are subject to it, and are governed and ruled by it. In each of them is a David, that is a guardian appointed by the Abbot or provincial of this monastery, who is also David under the Abba. I always heard say that there were in this monastery three thousand friars, and because I doubted it much I came here to keep the feast of our Lady of August, in order to see if they would come together. Certainly I rejoiced to see the riches of this monastery, and the procession which they made: in my judgment the friars did not exceed three hundred, and most of them were very old. There is a circuit to this monastery which surrounds the two which are like cloisters covered in, and this one which is not covered in was on that occasion all covered in with brocades and inferior brocades, and velvets of Mekkah, all long pieces, sewn one to another in order that they might shelter the whole circuit. They made a very beautiful procession through this canopied circuit; all wore cloaks of the same stuffs, brocades, and velvets of Mekkah, badly made as I mentioned above. They carried fifty small crosses of silver, of bad workmanship, and as many

[1] Should be *teskar*.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

000 574 middle upwards hairy like lions. We passed the mountain, and went to sleep at the foot of a village called Zalote. There will be about four or five leagues from this place to the monastery from which we set out. We halted by a running river of very good water, and when our baggage had been unloaded we went to the said village to see a very honourable gentleman, the headman of it—a very old man, who was lodged here very honourably. He gave us a very [262] hospitable reception, giving us many fowls cooked in butter, and much mead, and he sent us a very large fat cow to the place of our halt. On the following day, which was Sunday, we went to say our mass at the church of the village, which is called St. Michael, a poor church, both the fabric and the ornaments. There are in this church three 793 married priests and three others, deacons,[1] that is to say, of 796 the gospel, and all are necessary, for no less can say mass. This honourable captain I met with later as a friar in the monastery of Bisan, and he left his condition and revenues to his sons, who were honourable persons; and I saw him stand at the gate outside, and he did not enter within the monastery, and there he received the communion with the novices, and when the offices of the church were ended he remained in honour with the provincial. On this Sunday we set out again in the afternoon, because the country 133 people who conducted us wished it so. Here we began to travel through flat country fallows and tillage, in the fashion of Portugal, and the bushes which are between the tilled lands are all wild olives, without other trees. We slept by some running streams, between many good villages.

[1] *Zagonaes.* Ethiopian corruption of *diakonos.*

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

346 other women do in the church of the apostles, who take it
562 in its place. I always saw the women of the Barnagais go
[644] to the women's church to take the communion with the other women, and I did not see them use the privilege which they say they have, of taking the communion, with one damsel, in the church of the men. The circuits of the churchyards join to one another; they are of very high
796 walls. They make the sacramental bread for both churches in one building, and they say the masses in both churches at the same time, and the priests who serve in one church serve also in the other; that is two thirds of the priests in the men's church, and one third in the women's church, and so they are distributed. These churches have not got tithes, but they have got much land belonging to the priests, and they put it out to profit and divide the revenues of the lands among themselves: the Barnagais gives what is necessary to the churches, such as ornaments, wax, butter, incense in sufficient quantity, and he supplies them with
[792] everything. There may be in these churches twenty priests and always twenty-two friars. I never saw a church of priests which had not got friars, nor a monastery of friars which had got priests; because the friars are so numerous that they cover the world, both in the monasteries as also in the churches, roads, and markets: they are in every place.

CAP. XXVI.—*How the priests are, and how they are ordained, and of the reverence which they pay to the churches and*
793 *their churchyards.*

684 The priests are married to one wife, and they observe the
587 law of matrimony better than the laity: they live in their houses with their wives and children. If their wife should die they do not marry again; neither can the wife, but she

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

may become a nun or remain a widow as she pleases. If a priest sleeps with another woman whilst his wife is alive he does not enter the church any more, nor does he enjoy its goods, and remains as a layman. And this I know from having seen a priest accused before the patriarch of having slept with a woman, and I saw that the priest confessed the offence, and the patriarch commanded him not to carry a cross in his hand, nor to enter a church, nor to enjoy the liberties of the church, and to become a layman. If any priests after becoming widowers marry, they remain laymen, As it happened to Abuquer, who married Romana Orque, sister of Prester John, who I have already said was a priest, chief chaplain of Prester John, and he was disordained[1] and made a layman. He no longer enters the church, and receives the communion at the door of the church as a layman, and among the women. The sons of the priests are for the most part priests, because in this country there are no schools, nor studies, nor masters to teach, and the clergy teach that little that they know to their sons: and so they make them priests without more legitimisation, neither does it seem to me that they require it, since they are legitimate sons. All are ordained by the Abima Markos, for in all the kingdoms of Ethiopia there is no other bishop or person who ordains. The orders are given in two stages, as I will relate further on. I with my own eyes saw them given many times. In all this country the churchyards are inclosed by very strong walls, that the wild beasts may not disinter the dead bodies. They show them great reverence, no man riding on a mule passes before a church, even though he is going in a great hurry, without dismounting, until he has passed the church and churchyard a good bit.

[1] *Foy desordenado e feito leigo*; not a correct expression.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

places which are chief towns of districts, every week. The fairs consist of bartering one thing for another, as for instance, an ass for a cow, and that which is of least value gives to the other two or three measures of bread. By means of bread they buy stuffs, and with stuffs they buy mules and cows, and whatever they want, for salt, incense, pepper, myrrh, camphor, and other small articles.[1] They buy fowls and capons, and whatever they need or want to buy is all to be found at these fairs in exchange for others, for there is no current money. The principal merchants at these fairs are priests, friars, and nuns. The friars are decent in their habits, which are full, and reaching to the ground. Some wear yellow habits of coarse cotton stuff, others habits of tanned goat skins like wide breeches,[2] also yellow. The nuns also wear the same habits; the friars wear, besides, capes of the fashion of Dominican friars, of the same yellow skins or stuffs, they wear hats; and the nuns wear neither capes nor hats, but only the habit, and are shaven with a razor; and they wear a leather strap wound or fastened round the head. When they are old women they wear fillets[3] round their heads over their tonsures. These nuns are not cloistered, nor do they live together in convents, but in villages, and in the monasteries of the friars, on account of belonging to those houses and order. The order is all one, and the nuns give obedience where they receive their habits. With regard to entering churches and monasteries, the nuns do not enter except as other women do. There is a great multitude of nuns, as well as of friars; they say that some of them are very holy women, and others are not so. The priests show very little difference from the laity in their dress, because all wear a good cloth wrapped round, like smart men, and their difference is that they carry a cross in their hand, and are shaven, and the laity wear long hair. The priests also have

[1] *Bechugarias.* [2] *Zafoens* or *Safoens.* [3] *Tufas.*

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

this, that they do not cut their beard, and the laity shave below the chin and the throat. There are other priests, whom they call Debeteraas, which means canons; these belong to great churches, which are like their cathedrals or collegiate churches, and are not monasteries. These are very well dressed, and at once appear as what they are: these do not go to the fairs and markets.

CAP. XXX.—*Of the state of the Barnagais and manner of his house, and how he ordered a proclamation to be made to go against the Nobiis,*[1] *and the method of his justice.*

The service of this Barnagais is very poor in state, although he is a great lord and has the title of king. As many times as we spoke to him we always found him seated on a bedstead beneath a coverlid, and himself covered with hairy cotton cloths which they name *basutos*; they are good for the country, and there are some here of a high price. Behind the sides of the bedstead, walls, without anything except four swords hung each on a pole, and two great books, also suspended on poles. In front of the bedstead, mats on the floor, upon which sit those who come; the houses rarely swept, his wife always seated on a mat near the head of the bedstead, many people always before him, the great people seated on mats. In sight of his bedstead stand four horses, one always saddled, and the others covered, not caparisoned for war, but as horses are in the stables. In these houses of his are two inclosures, and each one has its gate, and in it porters with whips in their hands, and in the one nearest to him are smarter porters. Between these gates, the inner one and the outer one, is always his Alicaxi, which means his judge, hearing causes and administering justice. If the cause is important,

[1] Nubians.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

He said that no men died at the hands of justice, that they flogged many, and put out the eyes of some, and of others they cut off a foot or a hand, according to the quality the crime; but that he had seen a man burned because he was found to have committed two robberies in a church.

That the Pope or Patriarch of the country of Prester John is called Abima, which means father, and that there is nobody else in all the kingdoms and lordships of the Prester who confers orders except him.

The Prester John is called Acegue,[1] which means emperor, and he is called Neguz, which means king.

There is no manner of physic, only they apply fire; in some sickness they use cupping without fire, and for headaches, they bleed on the head with a knife placed on the vein, and they strike it with a stick so that it should draw blood, and also they take some herbs as a beverage to cure themselves.

In all the country there is no town which exceeds one thousand six hundred inhabitants, and of these there are few, and there are no walled towns or castles, but villages without number. The houses generally, or most of them, are round, and all of one story, covered with terraces or thatch, and courtyards round them. People generally sleep on ox-hides, others on beds made of straps of the same hides; no kind of table. They eat in flat trenchers, like trays of great width, without napkins or tablecloths. They have basins of very black earthenware like jet, and pipkins of the same clay for drinking water and wine. Many eat raw meat, and others eat it roasted on the ashes, others roasted over woodfire, and others over cowdung where there is no wood. There is much wax there, and tapers and candles; they do not make candles of tallow. There is no oil there except a kind which they call *hena*, and which is made from some herbs like Mayweed;[2] it has no taste, and is beautiful as gold. There

[1] *Alegue*, an Emperor.

[2] *Pampilhos*, also called *olho de boy*.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

and so receive absolution. They pray in the churches of 796
the canons as in those of the friars. Friars do not marry, [782]
canons and priests do so. When the canons live together 793
in the circuit they eat in their houses, and the friars eat in
community. The chiefs of these churches are called Lica-
canate. The wives of the canons have houses outside of the
circuit, where they go to live with them: the son of a
canon remains a canon, and the son of a priest not, except
he chooses later to become one. No tithes are paid to any
church, they live on the large properties which the churches
and monasteries possess. Complaints against the clergy [694]
are dealt with before the secular justice.

The vestment is made like a shirt, and the stole with a 292
hole in the middle, and put over the head; they have no
maniple, nor amice, nor girdle; priests and friars all have [302]
their heads shaved, and the beards not. The friars say
mass with their hats on their heads, and the priests with
their heads bare.

In no church is more than one mass said, and no mass is 794
said for alms, not even for the dead. When any person dies,
the priests come with cross and holy water and incense,
and recite certain prayers for him, and carry him off to
burial very hurriedly: next day they bring offerings: the
churchyards are all closed, so that nothing can enter them.

Prester John has no determined place of abode, he 643
always goes about the country in tents, and he will always
have in his camp five or six tents among good and common
ones: and there will always be at Court of people for the 644
horses and mules from fifty thousand upwards.

The kitchen of Prester John is a good crossbow shot
behind his quarters, and they bring his food in this manner:
all that he has to eat comes in porringers and dishes of
very black earthenware on wooden trays, and pages bring
them, and above the pages come a pallium of silk, which
covers them so that these viands come with reverence.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

346 their own. They are placed like a frize, and hung in
532 the upper part of the wall. St George is generally there with his dragon, and Demetrius fighting a lion. There is no choice in their saints; they are both of the Old and New Testament, and some that might be dispensed with from both. There is St Pontius Pilate and his wife; there is St Balaam and his ass; Samson and his jaw-bone; and so of the rest. But the thing that surprised me most was a kind of square-miniature upon the front of the head-piece, or mitre, of the priest, administering the sacrament at Adowa, representing Pharaoh on a white horse, plunging in the Red Sea, with many guns and pistols swimming upon the surface of it around him.

Nothing embossed, nor in relief, ever appears in any of the churches; all this would be reckoned idolatry, so much that they do not wear a cross, as has been represented, on the top of the ball of the sendick, or standard, because it casts a shade; but there is no doubt that pictures have been used in their churches from the very earliest age of Christianity.

● 793 The Abuna is looked upon as the patriarch of the Abyssinian church, for they have little knowledge of the Coptic patriarch of Alexandria. We are perfectly ignorant of the history of these prelates for many years after their appointment. The first of these mentioned is Abuna Tecla Haimanout, who distinguished himself by the restoration of the royal family, and the regulations he made both in the church and state, as we have seen in the history of those times. A very remarkable, but wise regulation was then made, that the Abyssinians should not have it in their power to choose one of their own countrymen as Abuna.

Wise men saw the fallen state of literature among them; and unless opportunity was given, from time to time, for their priests to go abroad to Jerusalem for their instruction, and for the purpose of bringing the

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

Abuna, Tecla Haimanout knew that very soon no set of people would be more shamefully ignorant than those priests, even in the most common dogmas of their profession. He hoped, therefore, by a considerable stipend, to tempt some men of learning to accept of this place, to give his countenance to learning and religion among them.

The Arabic canon*, which is preserved by the Abyssinian church, and said to be of the council of Nice, should certainly be attributed to this Abuna, and is a forgery in, or very soon after, his time; for, it is plain this canon took place about the year 1300, that it was lawful to elect an Abuna, who was a native of Abyssinia before this prohibition, otherwise it would not have been applied. Abuna Tecla Haimanout was an Abyssinian by birth, and he was Abuna; the prohibition, therefore, had not then taken place: but, as no Abyssinian was afterwards chosen, it must certainly be a work of his time; for it is impossible a canon should be made by the council of Nice, settling the rank of a bishop in a nation, which, for above 200 years after that general council, were not Christians.

As the Abuna very seldom understands the language, he has no share of the government, but goes to the palace on days of ceremony, or when he has any favour to ask, or complaint to make. He is much fallen in esteem from what he was formerly, chiefly from his own little intrigues, his ignorance, avarice, and want of firmness. His greatest employment is in ordinations. A number of men and children present themselves at a distance, and there stand, from humility, not daring to approach him. He then asks who these are? and they tell him that they want to be deacons. On this, with a small iron cross in his hand,

* See Ludolf, lib. iii. cap. 2. No. 17.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

●793 after making two or three signs, he blows with his mouth twice or thrice upon them, saying, "Let them be deacons." I saw once all the army of Begemder made deacons, just returned from shedding the blood of 10,000 men, thus drawn up in Aylo Meidan, and the Abuna standing at the church of St Raphael, about a quarter of a mile distant from them. With these were mingled about 1000 women, who, consequently, having part of the same blast and brandishment of the cross, were as good deacons as the rest.

The same is performed with regard to monks. A crowd of people, when he is riding, will assemble within 500 yards of him, and there begin a melancholy song. He asks, who these men with beards are? they tell him they want to be ordained monks. After the same sign of the cross, and three blasts with his mouth, he orders them to be monks. But, in ordaining priests, they must be able to read a chapter of St Mark, which they do in a language he does not understand a word of. They then give the Abuna a brick of salt, to the value of perhaps sixpence, for their ordination; which, from their present given, the Jesuits maintained to be simoniacal.

The Itchegue is the chief of the monks in general, especially those of Debra Libanos. The head of the other monks, called those of St Eustathius, is the superior of the convent of Mahebar Selasse, on the N. W. corner of Abyssinia, near Kuara, and the Shangalla, towards Sennaar and the river Dender. All this tribe is grossly ignorant, and through time, I believe, will lose the use of letters entirely.

The Itchegue is ordained by two chief priests holding a white cloth, or veil, over him, while another says a prayer; and then they lay all their hands on his head, and join in psalms together. He is a man, in troublesome times, of much greater consequence

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

than the Abuna. There are, after these, chief priests and scribes, as in the Jewish church: the last of these, the ignorant, careless copiers of the holy scriptures. 793

The monks here do not live in convents, as in Europe, but in separate houses round their church, and each cultivates a part of the property they have in land. The priests have their maintenance assigned to them in kind, and do not labour. A steward, being a layman, is placed among them by the king, who receives all the rents belonging to the churches, and gives to the priests the portion that is their due; but neither the Abuna, nor any other churchman, has any business with the revenues of churches, nor can touch them. 793 794

The articles of the faith of the Abyssinians have been inquired into and discussed with so much keenness in the beginning of this century, that I fear I should disoblige some of my readers were I to pass this subject without notice. 175 779

Their first bishop, Frumentius, being ordained about the year 333, and instructed in the religion of the Greeks of the church of Alexandria by St Athanasius, then sitting in the chair of St Mark, it follows, that the true religion of the Abyssinians, which they received on their conversion to Christianity, is that of the Greek church; and every rite, or ceremony, in the Abyssinian church may be found and traced up to its origin in the Greek church, while both of them were orthodox.

Frumentius preserved Abyssinia untainted with heresy till the day of his death. We find, from a letter preserved in the works of St Athanasius, that Constantius, the heretical Greek emperor, wished St Athanasius to deliver him up, which that patriarch refused to do: indeed, at that time, it was not in his power.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

347 one ounce to ten of gold, which gives it a very pale colour.

703 N. B. This observation is sufficiently confirmed by the colour of those links that still remain of the honorary gold chain conferred on Mr Bruce by the king of Abyssinia. These links are of a paler hue than a common guinea, rather coarsely made, and unpolished. Gold chains, called in Habbesh sunsulé, are a mark of dignity bestowed by the sovereign on the most meritorious persons in his army. It is usual to give a splendid suit of clothes at the same time, an Egyptian and Persian custom; vide Genesis, xli. 42. and Esther, viii. 15.

651 Wechne, in Belessen, is about 34 or 35 miles, a long day's journey from Emfras. There is paid, to maintain the royal family on the mountain, 250 ounces gold, and 730 cloths (this means webs of cotton cloth, called shuma). This is an old establishment. None are permitted to go up but the women carrying water. There was formerly a cistern, but it is now in ruins, and useless. There are near 300 persons there; and all the exiles are allowed to marry. Bacuffa escaped by help of his sister.

793 792 Extreme unction is unknown in Abyssinia; that is, the anointing with oil. However, when a person is attacked with sickness, which threatens death, he often puts on a monk's hood, as a token that, in case of recovery, he will abandon the world, and then receives the last sacrament, or rather he does so before putting it on; and it is generally the custom to distribute all his moveables to the churches, which the priests appropriate. These are traces of extreme unction. The great men ofen renounce the hood, and return to their former life.

792 N. B. The Abyssinian MS. histories are full of these instances, in which the great men, when disappointed in politics, retire to Waldubba, or other deserts, to live as monks. The distribution of goods and money made by the kings, when sick, to the churches, occurs in almost every reign. Before Yasous II. died, the Chronicle says, that he had given away every thing he had, in this way, except the crown on his head. When Joas was proclaimed, the Iteghe his grandmother wished to give a present to the poor, as usual at the begin-

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

gre, drinks out of a golden cup, as keeper of the law at Ax- 644
um. There are 12 nagareets in Tigre, and forty-four persons are invested with the Ras-werk.

Church affairs. The Abuna is appointed by proclamation 793 ●
of the king, and is deposed at his pleasure. He holds of no 794
other person. He ordains priests and deacons within the kingdom, consecrates churches, altars (tabot), &c. His revevenue was once very considerable, esteemed one-third of the revenues of the kingdom; but as those princes, who made the grants, resided in Shoa, or in the south of Tigre, the principal lands are in those provinces, adjoining to the royal residence. Now, the southern provinces are all in the hands of the Galla, as well as part of Tigre, and the governor, or Ras, has assumed the rest; so that of 400 oz. of gold once paid by Tigre, the Abuna, in my time, got only twenty-five, one-third of which went to the king's wakeel in his house. The Abuna appoints no officer, civil, or ecclesiastical; the king, or governor, does all. The king appoints officers, called Alaka, who administer in all cases the revenue of churches and convents; and this person is the judge of differences and suits among the priests and monks of his church, or fraternity, from whom lies no appeal but to the King, or to the Ras, who is understood to represent him. This Alaka is, or is not, a monk, or priest, at the king's pleasure. Of those who are called monks, are the communities of Debra Libanos, or Azazo, as it is now called, Waldubba, Werkleva, Damo, Mahabar Selasse, &c. These live in villages in these places, and reside or not as they please. The rest of that name are those who are ordained on any illness, disappointment, or advanced in life. The monks are ordained by the Itchegue, the others by any ordinary priest. Neither take any vow. The women of Waldubba are of the first kind, and all women past pleasure compose the second. There are many instances of both orders renouncing and marrying.

All persons, as well ecclesiastical as civil, are subject to the 692
same laws, judgment, and tribunal, without exception, be the cause of whatever nature it may be. The Abuna, or Itchegue, have none of them a tribunal, nor can they take cognizance of any cause; especially the Abuna, who has, as I have said, an officer in his house appointed by the king, who pu-

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

692 nishes all persons by that authority, even those of the Abuna's family, without any sort of deference paid to him; and this, as appears by the judges, or king's records, is of very ancient standing. The king calls an assembly of the clergy when he pleases, generally with the advice of the Abuna, and there is none considered legal if he is not present, if in the kingdom.

[682] Welled Hayrat (Ras Michael's son) was excommunicated for killing a refugee at the Abuna's feet, in consequence of which he confiscated the Abuna's villages in Tigre, nor was the curse ever taken off *. The Itchegue, or prior of the 693 monks, if he be chosen a lay-man, must be ordained by the 793 Abuna. He is named by the king, who nominates all superiors of monasteries. The Liku-cahanat, or chief of the priests, is ordained by the Abuna and Itchegue, who both hold a corner of a scarf put upon him. He is an inquisitor of morals among the priests, and has so much salt and cloth from each district. A priest at his ordination pays three salts to the Abuna. He comes to the house of the latter, enters, and kisses the threshold. The Abuna, sitting on a sofa at one end of the room, reads the Scriptures to himself. Then having paid his salt, the person retires and kisses the threshhold, returning without imposition of hands, or any ceremony. Old men are made priests, and young men deacons by a simple jussit. More probable accounts say, that there is only one salt paid, that the person stands at the door, while the Abuna, having made the sign of the cross, holding it in his hand, says, "I have ordained you a priest." The person then enters the room, kisses the cushion of the sofa, and retires. Many are ordained that can neither read nor write.

[764] The Abyssinians have an office for the dead; and worship 778 pictures of saints, even such as are not consecrated. This we had an opportunity of seeing, every time we were obliged to draw some Madonna. All those that saw it, kissed the 000 ground before it, with their foreheads on the earth. The

* The Abuna's house is a kind of sanctuary, in which criminals are protected from massacre, not from trial. They are sometimes tried there by the royal judges, or dragged from it to the tribunal.

[p. 56]

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

175 worse should befall them, and the process was rapid and
771 simple—immersion in the nearest stream, circumcision, and generally the tying of a piece of blue silk cord round the neck.

779 The form of Christianity professed by Abyssinia is the monophysite, which was condemned as a "heresy" by the Council of Chalcedon in 450. This doctrine recognizes only one nature in Christ, against the view which has maintained itself as orthodox that the divine and human natures co-existed in him. But in spite of the thunders of Chalcedon the Abyssinians have held to their doctrine, although controversies as to a single, dual, and even threefold nature have raged in the country right up to the time of Theodore, who possessed decided views on the subject, and exercised drastic methods in giving effect to them.

793 The Church is to all intents and purposes an independent one, its only link with the Coptic Church in Egypt, on which it is nominally dependent, being the appointment by Alexandria of the Archbishop, or Abouna: he is an Egyptian, and once appointed he is supposed never to leave the country.

Tradition relates that the appointment of a foreign Abouna was laid down as a cardinal principle by the great Abyssinian ecclesiastic and national saint, Tekla Haimanot, in the thirteenth century in order to maintain connection between Abyssinia and the outside world, and to avoid internal rivalry in the nomination to the headship of the Church. Be that as it may, the Abyssinians attach considerable importance to their connection with the Alexandrian Church through their Abouna; this may be gauged from the fact that the Treaty between England, Egypt, and Abyssinia, made

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

by Admiral Sir William Hewett with King John in 1884, expressly provides that "H.H. the Khedive engages to grant all the facilities which H.M. the Negusa Negus may require in the matter of appointing Abounas for Ethiopia". 193

His is the power to crown kings, and no priest can be ordained without him. He officiates at all the big religious festivals, and his influence in the councils of state is reported to be considerable.

Mr Winwood Reade, in his book *The Martyrdom of Man*, states that "by way of blessing he (the Abouna) spits upon his congregation, who believe that the episcopal virtue resides in the saliva and not as we think in the finger-ends". I am bound to say we never saw or heard of this particular form of benediction while we were there, but even if it were so, it would not be so very surprising in view of the fact that, as everyone knows, at the baptism of children Roman Catholic priests to this day moisten their thumbs with their saliva and touch the child's nostrils therewith when they are baptizing it. 188

Up to the time of King Abreha, when the conversion of the country to Christianity took place, the head of the then existing religion was in accordance with Mosaic practice the High Priest. The nomination of a Bishop or Abouna followed, and functions were divided between the two, the Abouna being regarded as the chief in matters of religion proper, settling all questions of dogma and theology, whilst the High Priest controlled the Church staff and property. A further functionary known as the *Itcheque* was created in the thirteenth century, and duties were divided amongst these three up to the time of the Emperor 193

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

793 Menelik, who made the Abouna supreme head of all matters; the *Itcheque* second with residence at the great national monastery of Debra Libanos; and the High Priest third in the hierarchy.

794 793 792 The wealth and influence of the Church are enormous, a state of affairs due to the prescience of Tekla Haimanot, to whom reference has already been made. This remarkable man is supposed to have negotiated the restoration of the Solomonean line after three hundred years of deposition, and his modest price seems to have been a perpetual grant to the Church of one-third of the country. As a result the extent of the Church lands is tremendous: not only do monasteries, convents, and churches cover the country but great areas belong to them, and the revenues accruing therefrom are utilized to maintain an almost unbelievable number of monks, priests, and *debtera*. The numbers of these people were given to me by Abyssinians as over a million—this is of course absurd—but I was assured on good authority that over a quarter of the male population are included in these categories of parasites. And parasites they are, for they serve no useful purpose and exist on the taxes raised from the people working on the land: they do no work themselves and are even exempted from military service. They are on the whole ignorant and illiterate, for while some of them can read, very few indeed can write.

793 792 Monks are not supposed to marry: priests are allowed to marry once, and in fact do so: *debtera* are free as laymen; but I do not think that the lives of many of them could profitably be held up as examples for the people to follow.

793 No examination and little or no preparation seem

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

to be necessary for ordination: payment of moderate fees ranging up to $5 (about 10s. to-day) appears to be all that is required. In this direction matters do not seem to have progressed much since Bruce wrote in 1790 giving the following description of an ordination:

"A number of men and children present themselves at a distance, and there stand from humility, not daring to approach him. He then asks who they are, and they tell him they want to be deacons (*debtera*). On this with a small iron cross on his hands after making two or three signs, he blows with his mouth twice or thrice upon them, saying, 'Let them be deacons'. I saw once all the army of Begemder made deacons, just returned from shedding the blood of 10,000 men, thus drawn up in Aylo Meidan, and the Abouna standing at the Church of St. Raphael, about a quarter of a mile distant from them. With these mingled about 1000 women, who consequently, having part of the same blast and brandishment of the Cross, were as good deacons as the rest."

It is highly regrettable in the interests of Abyssinia that the priesthood, being what they are, should exercise so much power and influence. This is no doubt attributable to a variety of causes, to tradition, wealth, land ownership, and also to the fact that they (or some of them) are the only persons in the country who understand the ancient Geze language in which the Code of Law (the *Fetha Nagast*) and other similar works are written. This gives them a great "pull", and one result is that they are an indispensable adjunct to all the judges, who are very much in their hands.

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920) 1935.
MP5 Amhara MP5

793 176 They have always been bitterly opposed to progress and to innovations, more so as regards changes in their own Church than as regards the introduction into the land of alien religions, strange to say. Thus for example a learned individual, a very religious layman whom I knew, had been accused by the priests of expounding the Gospels in a manner somewhat different to that generally accepted, and as a result he was imprisoned for three years. His views on the subject of his own Church were instructive!

793 609 On the other hand they are by no means so intolerant to other religious beliefs and efforts in the country; they are not fanatical, and if left alone and not interfered with are not markedly anti-foreign. Individually I have always found them quite pleasant and friendly, and I am bound to say that Mr Wylde, who met a great many of them in various parts of the country, seemed vastly to prefer them to European missionaries. But as a body I think they are—to put it mildly—an unfortunate institution, and so far as their possessions are concerned, treatment on the lines adopted by our Henry VIII would seem to be overdue.

609 795 Moslems, Jews, and others practise their religion in peace. I have seen religious processions of the followers of Islam on their feast days pass through the streets shouting and singing completely free from molestation, and on the occasion of my last visit I saw a mosque which was on the verge of completion being constructed in one of the principal streets of Addis Ababa.

It is rather remarkable that in spite of the bitter religious warfare in which they have been engaged for centuries Abyssinians should be so tolerant of their

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

sponsored the translation of works from Arabic. Among these were *Laws of the Kings*, a collection of civil and canon laws which became the official basis for judication, and a penitential manual, *Spiritual Medicine*, the last major production in Ge'ez literature.

Yohānnes also continued Fāsil's work of "purifying" the church. He decreed that descendants of the Portuguese must leave Ethiopia unless they joined the Orthodox Church and that Muslims must reside apart, either in their own villages or in ghettos. Ordained as a priest before becoming emperor, Yohānnes followed keenly the theological disputes of his day. Toward the end of his reign he convoked a synod in Gondar to discuss the nature of the Holy Spirit in Christ, the chief theological question in Ethiopian history.

Iyāsu I, like many of Ethiopia's rulers, appears to have been moved by deep religious feeling. Describing Iyāsu's religiosity, one of the priests of Gondar wrote an eulogy a few years after his death:

> The king used to stand at the window of his palace . . . and listen from his tower on high to the singing of the priests and learned men, to their gentle hymns which moistened the bones by their exceeding tenderness. When their offerings pleased him greatly he was pierced with affection for them and drawn by the harmony of their heavenly peace. For this reason . . . he would prepare for them dinners filled with delights, and bid them eat with him in his royal chambers, ornamented all about with the beauty of pure gold and wrought silver. He would take off his gold necklace and present it to them. He adorned them with garments of purple and of staffs interwoven with gold from the treasury of his kingdom. . . . None of the kings before him had done such as he, and none of the clergy of yore had been treated as were his priests and learned men. After the dinners, the king and his priests together sang hymns of joy and jubilation all night long in the palace—in their time of pleasure, in the sweetness of divine ministry.*

Iyāsu the Great did much to establish Gondar as the most important center of religious culture in Ethiopia. To this end he brought outstanding priests and learned men from all over the country to his capital. From Gojjam, for example, he brought the great master of religious verse, Kiflē Yohānnes, whose lines are remembered even today. The number of teachers in Gondar in his time exceeded five hundred; there were one hundred and fifty at his church Dabra Berhān Selassie alone.* It was under Iyāsu I that the classic subject matter of the higher religious studies in Abyssinia—*zēmā* ("religious

* Dabra Berhān Selassie, one of the two churches built by Iyāsu I, is the only one of the original churches of Gondar which survived later conflagrations of the city. The original paintings which covered its walls have been preserved, as well as the remarkable ceiling from which rows of wide-eyed angels look down from between wooden beams. The church provides separate places for nobility and commoners, and a balcony for the emperor.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

kindles artistic expression, so the poet could wax eloquent over Gondar's decadence at the close of the eighteenth century:

> Beautiful from its beginnings, Gondar, hope of the wretched!
> And hope of the great, Gondar, without measure or bounds!
> O dove of John, Gondar, generous-hearted, mother!
> Gondar, never bowed by affliction!
> Gondar, with its merry name!
> Gondar, seat of prosperity and of savoury food!
> Gondar, dwelling of King Iyāsu and of mighty Bakāffā!
> Gondar, which emulated the city of David, the land of Salem!
> She will be a myth unto eternity.
> How is it she has been destroyed like Sodom, and without any guilt?[9]

So, while the reputation of the Gondar monarchy grew dim, that of the town as a center for religious studies continued unabated. Gondar was the most famous place in the country for instruction in art, music, dance, poetry, and the great books of the Ethiopian Church, and young men continued to travel great distances to drink at such sources. The descendants of royalty somehow made their adjustment. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Arnauld d'Abbadie finds them making paintings and illuminating manuscripts.

At this late date, one more personality of stature emerges from Gondar. This time it is not a king but a *dabtarā*, or man of religious learning—Alaqā Gabra Hānnā. Gabra Hānnā was born in the district of Foggarā on the east coast of Lake Ṭānā. His pursuit of religious studies as a youth took him to Gondar, where he did well and before long became a teacher in the church of Ba'ātā Māryām. Subsequently he was made head of the church, receiving the customary title of *alaqā*.

While at Ba'ātā, Alaqā Gabra Hānnā invented a new style of dance for the clergy. In the traditional style of *aquāquām*, the bodies and sticks of the dancers move up and down, punctuating the flow of chant with alternately gradual and abrupt vertical movements. Alaqā Gabra Hānnā, inspired by the lateral movement of the waves at Lake Ṭānā and of the bamboo reeds in the breeze at its shore, taught that bodies and sticks should sway from side to side. This innovation was rejected by the conservative clergy at Gondar, but it was carried by his son Taklē to Dabra Tābor and from there spread elsewhere.

Alaqā Gabra Hānnā became most famous, however, for his quick and biting wit. So prolific and beloved were his witticisms that in a collection of some three hundred old parables and anecdotes published in Addis Ababa in 1955, no fewer than 25 per cent are devoted to stories about him.[10] After reaching prominence through his teachings and sayings, Alaqā Gabra Hānnā

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

(GONDAR)

left Gondar for Shoa, where he became a favorite at the court of Emperor Menelik.

Alaqā Gabra Hānnā was not the only one to leave Gondar in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Conditions there had become increasingly miserable. In 1866 Tēwodros, angered by the opposition of the Gondarē clergy to his plans for unifying the country through a standing national army, turned his wrath against them into a fearful pillage of the churches of Gondar.* The next emperor, Takla Giyorgis, worked feverishly to rebuild Gondar during his few years in power (1869–72). It was to no avail. In 1887 a large army of dervishes invaded Ethiopia from the Sudan and sacked Gondar, destroying it more completely than had Tēwodros.

The priests and monks who survived carried on. Gondar remained an important center for instruction in *aquāquām* and *tergum*, though Gojjam became more important for the study of *qenē* and other schools in Bagemder and Tigre for the study of *zēmā*. The civil order, however, was thoroughly demoralized. Gondarēs left in large numbers for the countryside or made their way to Lāstā and more distant provinces.

At the time of the dervish invasion, the churchmen of Gondar appealed to Emperor Yohānnes for succor. The text of their message—the last utterance from the old capital—began as follows:

> O master! The heathen have come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Gondar in heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Dambiyā; and there was none to bury them.[11]

Yohānnes responded at once. It was to revenge defenseless Gondar that he led the expedition against the dervishes which cost him his life, thereby leaving the way open for the accession of the House of Manz.

The Role of Manz

Manz is a rugged rural area of about 850 square miles located in the northeast horn of Shoa Province.[12] It lies on a broad plateau at a height of ten thousand feet above sea level. This plateau is crosscut by a number of rivers which flow westerly to become part of the great Blue Nile Basin. The valleys of the rivers are flanked by fairly abrupt cliffs, which make travel from one part of Manz to another slow going. These rivers form boundaries between the geographical divisions within Manz, which is divided into three major parts: Māmā Meder in the south, Lālo Meder in the center, and Gērā Meder in the north. The entire area of Manz is itself bounded by steep mountains.[13]

* Fortunately he preserved hundreds of manuscripts from Gondar's churches which eventually found their way to the British Museum after the Napier Expedition against Tēwodros in 1868.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*175 18 flushed with the reports of Menelik's conquests[47] and embellished by the wax and gold of Alaqā Gabra Hānnā, was a kind of traditional climax, a final expression of the integrity of traditional Amhara culture.

THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE

633 197 648 *Gondar Today*

A renascence of Gondar began during the Italian occupation, when it was made the capital of Amhara, one of the five large provinces into which the Italians divided Ethiopia. They equipped Gondar with modern buildings and roads, restored parts of the old castles, and made it the transportation center of northwestern Ethiopia.

633 After the liberation, Gondar retained some administrative importance by becoming the capital of Bagemdir, one of the twelve provinces of postwar Ethiopia. A further impetus toward development of the town came in 1953 [874] with the selection of Gondar as site for Ethiopia's first public health college. [648] The existence of this college, with its enthusiastic staff of WHO and AID personnel, has stimulated the improvement of transportation and public utilities as well as local medical services. The population has increased to twenty [162] thousand.[48] The progress shown by the city inspired one Ethiopian journalist to write, in the *Addis Zaman* of April 19, 1960: "By virtue of its annually increasing growth, sanitation, and modern appearance, one is emboldened to say that the city of Gondar takes second place only to Addis Ababa."

633 871 198 With the turn of Ethiopia's interest from the old church curriculum to a modern educational program, the traditional importance of Gondar has necessarily declined. It remains the place to go for the study of *aquāquām* and for a "diploma" in textual studies, but the total number of students now pursuing these subjects is probably less than a hundred. Almost none of the young people of Gondar itself attend the higher church schools. Still in the vanguard of learning, Gondar's youth prefer the currently more advantageous government schools. The elementary schools of Gondar receive many more applicants than they can accommodate each year. Gondar's secondary school is, next to that of Harar, the oldest and largest in the provinces.

633 771 793 Nevertheless, the life of Gondar is still dominated by its clergy. Nine church schools in Gondar are supported by government funds. Unlike other cities in Ethiopia, Gondar is partly governed by a town council of clergymen. The city is divided into districts marked by the location of the churches, and the town council consists of the heads of these churches—some of whose positions are so important that they are assigned directly by the Emperor. This council is convened to handle disputes over land and other matters, and to communicate the mayor's proclamations to the people. An accusation signed for a plaintiff by a priest carries much weight in the local courts. The ecclesias-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

tical character of Gondar has been implanted deeply enough so that one young Gondarē, commenting on the absence of dance halls such as are found in other Ethiopian cities, remarked: "This place is one big monastery."

In accord with Haile Selassie's program of centralization, the chief provincial administrators in Gondar are not local men. This has created a subtle problem for the national government. The Gondarēs cannot forget that their city was the capital of Ethiopia for more than two hundred years. They view the Shoans as political upstarts and love to refer to the Shoan Amhara as "Galla." As a result, Shoans in high offices at Gondar have found themselves boycotted by the natives. Their wishes have frequently been ignored by local subordinates or the local populace. They have not been invited to take part in the social life of the Gondarēs. All this has made the lot of Shoan emissaries in Gondar frustrating and lonely.

In order to increase the Gondarē's identification with the national government, its representatives in Gondar have tried in various ways to assert the symbolic supremacy of Addis Ababa. The traditional site for celebrating the festival of Masqal—the great sycamore near Fāsil's castle—has been shifted to the modern Haile Selassie I Square. An imposing sculpture is to be placed over the tomb of Nagāssi, and a principal street in Gondar has been named after him. Plans are afoot to outshine the traditional marketplace with one enhanced by modern facilities, to be named Haile Selassie I Market.

Despite the evident satisfaction with which one Shoan administrator noted that "the Gondarēs are not so proud any more," even for Shoa's purposes the traditional prestige of Gondar cannot be completely eradicated. The government gains much profit by extolling Ethiopia's long history. The flight to Gondar has become a standard part of the itinerary for foreign dignitaries. Gondar remains, after the stelae of Aksum and the monoliths of Lalibela, the most impressive visible reminder of the Ethiopian past.

Manz Today

The accession of the House of Manz to the throne of Ethiopia has given Manz much prestige in the national capital. Because Menelik and his successors filled the government with people from their home area, numerous higher officials of the imperial Ethiopian government are also of Manzē origin. Partly for these reasons, partly because of their scanty knowledge of Ethiopian geography, many Ethiopians born and raised in Addis Ababa claim to be of Manzē ancestry, even though their families may in fact have come from Merhābētē or Bulgā or other parts of Shoa.

Due to the close tie between the present imperial family and the homeland of Manz, a special affection persists between Haile Selassie and the Manzēs. The latter are said to have a standing invitation at the palace, including the

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

drastic changes on the familiar natural order. Insofar as there is a special affect regarding nature, it takes the form of a sentimentalization of the useful—as in the great respect felt for young cattle, the thrill aroused by the sight of newly sprouted grain, and the deep nostalgia about one's land.

The Supernatural

The peasant's conception of God is closer to that of the learned clergy than is his cosmology, since the Abyssinian clergy have tended to avoid systematic theology, believing that to probe too deeply into the nature of God verges on blasphemy. Abyssinians view God above all as *mystery*.

Nevertheless, they do have a sense of the various attributes of their God. God is the creator of the world. He is, as the name *Egziābhēr* signifies, Lord of the earth; and He is Lord of the seas, Lord of the King of Kings, and Lord of the angels. He is eternal and possesses knowledge without limit.

The Amhara peasant has a keen awareness that wherever one goes, God is there. "If you say no one is looking," goes an Amharic saying, "still God will see you." This consciousness of God's presence is reflected in the habit of referring to God scores of times every day. A number of common expressions contain references to God:

For greeting and farewell	"May He give you health for me."
For showing gratitude	"May God give you for me."
For responding to queries about one's health	"God be praised!"
For thanksgiving after meals	"Be praised, my Lord!"
For swearing by a statement that has been challenged	"By God! By the Savior!"

Prayers to God are spoken on numerous occasions. God's blessing is sought when an animal is slaughtered, when a group of people sits to eat, when a new house is begun, and when it is completed. Each day begins with a prayer something like this: "May He cause me to spend the day in peace. May He keep trouble from me. May He pardon my sins." When the peasant begins planting, he also prays: "God bless the seed; feed me, keeping birds away from it; bless it for the mouth of man."

It is probably the attribute of God's omnipotence, however, that appears most vivid to the Amhara mind. Everything that happens reflects His active will. The thunder expresses His anger, a flood the visitation of His wrath upon the sinful. He is ever active, bringing births and deaths, prosperity and hunger, leading one traveler to safety and another to disaster. He controls the homeliest details of everyday life. One boy, troubled that he was not selling his goods in the market, confessed that God must be angry with him about something. Another, asked what he wanted to do the following year, replied:

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

the Amhara. Both partners enter the marriage with the full understanding that if they do not get along they will be able to separate without much difficulty, each partner taking half the goods that were accumulated during the marriage as well as the land and other private property each brought into the marriage. Only after several years of married life, which have resulted in children, and probably a separation followed by rapprochement or else divorce and remarriage, is the Amhara defined by his culture as a complete adult, a *mulu sēt* or *mulu saw*.

From Generation to Generation

Through the agency of his family of orientation, then, the Amhara adolescent automatically is prepared for adult work responsibilities and launched into married life. Continuity of the social system, however, also depends on the maintenance of a moral order that transcends the narrow commitments of kinship units. What of those sentiments that should dispose the young Amhara to conform with the more general norms of adult society?

The Abyssinian moral order rests primarily upon two pillars: the profession of Christianity and the institution of respect. These dispositions are firmly implanted during childhood and receive steady reinforcement during the transition to adulthood.

Maintenance of the fasting and dietary laws appears to be the central symbol of Christian identity in Amhara culture. Here again one may discern a pattern of progressively increased inculcation of norms throughout maturation. The taboos against pork and other unclean foods are taught at an early age and supported by references to unclean heathens ever after. More important, the Amhara learns step by step how to chasten his stomach in the traditional way. As soon as he is old enough to observe what goes on in his home, he is aware that meat products are not served to anyone on fasting days. Around the age of seven he begins his first regular fast, which means avoiding all food before noon, by observing the sixteen-day fast of *Felsatā*. The Wednesday and Friday fasts are supposed to be observed following this, though in practice it may be a few more years before the child keeps these weekly fasts regularly. Observance of the most trying fast of all, the eight-week fast of Lent, begins at about the age of fifteen.

At the same time, the adolescent comes increasingly under the jurisdiction of a member of the ordained clergy known as his *nafs abbāt* ("soul-father" or confessor). This is particularly so after marriage, when the young man may either continue to be attached to the soul-father of his own father or else may choose another one for himself. (The wife always takes the soul-father of her husband.) The soul-father serves as an agent of moral control by prescribing penance for his confessants when he learns of such infractions of the Christian rules as breaking the fasts.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

tian rules as breaking the fasts. By adjusting to the adult fasting schedule and submitting to the moral authority of the soul-father the young person's membership in the Amhara religious community is being solidly established. With the advent of full adulthood, around the age of thirty, the Amhara is ready to observe the most severe fast of all, the forty-eight-hour period of total abstinence before Easter.

Forms of obedience and respect comprise the principal fiber of the Amhara social fabric, as we shall see more clearly in chapter vii. They are perhaps the most fundamental lessons of Amhara socialization. As soon as the child is capable of understanding he is made aware that all individuals older than he is, and all those in higher social positions, must be shown the most fastidious deference. Not to do so is a sign of being *bälagē* ("rude"), a trait which is corrected by harsh physical punishment. The readiness to respect superiors appears as early as in children's play groups, where the oldest boy spontaneously dictates the activities of the group and receives unquestioning obedience from the others.

For girls after ten and boys after twelve the training for obedience and respect is stepped up as they come under a more constant regimen of control by their parents and other elders. They are ordered to do a considerable amount of work for the household and are expected to be at the beck and call of any individual of higher status who tells them to do something. Thus they become conditioned to show automatic subservience to any figure of authority in later life, be it the family patriarch, community elder, priest, or political official.

His family of orientation is thus the primary agent for transmitting to the Amhara adolescent the more general societal norms as well as for readying him for his adult roles. In order to secure continuity of the Abyssinian social system from generation to generation, specific mechanisms outside the family, such as puberty rites or adolescent age groups, have not been required to mediate the transition to adulthood.

Personal Identity and Variant Patterns[8]

The most important single determinant of the personality of an Amhara appears to be his identification with the parent or parent-figure of the same sex. "Like father, like son" is both ideology and reality in Abyssinia. The attainment of ego identity is therefore normally a matter of imitation rather than discovery or invention. It represents an unfolding of dispositions that have been long internalized and steadily nursed by the consistent regards of an approving milieu.

Assuming the appropriate psychosexual identity is, it appears, hardly ever problematic. Although members of the same sex typically kiss upon greeting,

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

a different identity. Religion and warfare were the two spheres most likely to attract him. Although trade and manual arts were possibilities for those whose industry exceeded their status-consciousness, they were considered the business of other ethnic groups and normally rejected by a self-respecting Amhara. When the Amhara youth left home for a new life, he was usually heading either for the school of some church teacher or the quarters of some chieftain.

Today, as in former times, the role of priest is known from childhood as a possible model for the peasant boy. He and his companions often imitate the clergy and their ceremonies in their play. The wish to become a priest is kindled by a number of interests—desire for the material benefits accorded the clergy; curiosity about the mysteries of the church; envy of the great prestige of the clergy; hope for a better chance of going to heaven after death. During adolescence the outlook of the boy who seeks to become a priest deviates from that of the *goramsā* described above. Instead of the shrill, blood-heating *shĭllala* war chants he prefers the gentle hymns of the church; instead of the frenzied dancing and singing of the young braves he prefers the schooled dance of the clergy; instead of pursuing women, he is inclined to turn his head the other way when a girl appears.

The military alternative does not seem to be an ideal of Amhara children. They rarely see soldiers; and when they did in former times, it was usually in the unhappy circumstance of seeing the family's reserves plundered. It is not until the time of puberty and after that the great upsurge of aggressive instinct has turned the thoughts of many an Amhara youth to fighting. Chafing under parental domination or bristling with resentment because of being an illegitimate offspring or a stepchild, he may be anxious to turn his hostility against some enemy. He may imagine the free life of a soldier more attractive than the drudgery of the peasant's lot. In the days of feudal armies, he may have heard news about some warlord on the rise and thus have hopes, by attaching himself as a follower, of winning booty and the laurels of a hero, perhaps eventually the powers of a chieftain.

Whether the peasant boy chooses church school or the warpath, his move has frequently been an all-or-none move. The peasant boy can do nothing without the consent of his father, and normally his father will not permit him to do anything except carry on the farmwork and prepare himself to care for his parents in their old age and to inherit the family land. If there should be some sign that the son does not want to continue in his father's footsteps, the latter will do everything he can short of disinheritance—and ofttimes that—to persuade him otherwise.

And so, some restless day, eyes fixed on some alluring goal, the Amhara youth might run away and not be seen again. If he should return, it would

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

It was at this time that the *makuānnent* came into their own. More unabashedly than ever they constituted, not a hereditary aristocracy in corporate opposition to the king, but a plurality of proud centers of rank—partly inherited, partly achieved—enjoying virtual autonomy. To move toward a modern nation it would be necessary to brake their centrifugal force.

The Clergy

Like the nobility, the clergy may be divided into those who are significant at the national level and those who are primarily local dignitaries. The former reside close to the imperial court, while the latter are thickly distributed around monasteries, churches, and wildernesses all over the country.

The highest ecclesiastical authority in Abyssinia was the *abuna* who, from the time of Frumentius in the fourth century until the death of Abuna Qerlos in 1949, was with few exceptions an appointee of the Coptic Patriarch at Alexandria. Chosen from the Egyptian monks of the convent of St. Anthony near the Red Sea, the *abuna* was brought, at great expense to the emperors, to live out his life in an alien land. Ignorant of the language and customs of the country, he played little part in the conduct of church affairs or in affairs of court; and when he did try to do so, his efforts were usually abruptly checked by jealous clerics and suspicious kings. His functions were purely ritual, but indispensable: he alone had authority to anoint and crown the emperor, to confer orders, and to absolve vows. From numerous revenues, rents, and fees, the *abuna* enjoyed a considerable income. Like the emperor, he was regarded as sacred because of the charisma of his office, and spent most of his time secluded from the public.[89]

Second in rank was the *eçhagē*, an appointment made by the emperor. This was the traditional title of the abbot of the convent of Dabra Libānos in Shoa, which in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries gained hegemony over Abyssinian monasticism. The *eçhagē* served as administrative head of the church and had jurisdiction over all monks and monasteries. The most esteemed of the Ethiopian clergy, he tended to wield more actual power than the *abuna*. His provincial deputies, called *liqa kāhenāt*, controlled the secular clergy. This office was also bestowed by the emperor, and its functions included presenting candidates for ordination and deciding questions of protocol in connection with religious ceremonies.

In addition to these supreme dignitaries of the church, a small number of churchmen enjoyed pre-eminent status by virtue of their activities at the imperial court. These included the *aqābē sa'āt* ("guardian of the [canonical] hours"), the chief ecclesiastic at court, and during part of the reign of Zar'a Yā'qob the only official with unrestricted access to the king; the *qēs hāṭsē* ("king's chaplain"); the *liqa dabtarā* ("chief of the *dabtarā*"); and *liqa mammerān* ("chief of the learned men"). These four served as the four su-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

preme judges at the royal court, and the *aqābē sa'āt* ranked third—in some lists, first—in the official order of precedence of all court dignitaries.[40]

One other church dignitary, finally, was the *nebra ed*, chief of the sacred district of Aksum, who always enjoyed a high position at the royal court. When appointed by the emperor (instead of by the provincial governor who sometimes possessed that authority), the *nebra ed* enjoyed the rare privilege of being permitted to sit while speaking in the event of his involvement in litigation.

The status of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries was based on approximately the same factors as those which determined the status of secular nobility: royal favor; family background, in the case of those whose fathers were important nobles or noted churchmen; and the possession of wealth, political power, and imposing titles.[41] The same was true of their regional counterparts, the *alaqā*, "chiefs" of large churches and monasteries, whose wealth, power, and leisurely mode of life gave them, in Plowden's opinion, "perhaps the most enviable position in Abyssinia."[42]

The status of the clergy as a whole, however, rested on three other principles which are not affected by royal favor, birth, or worldly possessions. These were: contact with the most sacred symbols of religious authority; ascetic piety; and religious learning. Broadly speaking, in Abyssinia these three principles have been embodied primarily in three distinct roles, namely, those of priest, monk, and *dabtārā*.

A normal preparation for these roles—necessarily so, in the case of the priesthood—is service as a deacon. Ability to read is, now as before, a requisite qualification for the diaconate, but that requirement has in the past often been overlooked. More important has been the requirement of ordination by the *abuna*. Ordination formerly took place in the company of hundreds of other aspirants and, when there was uncertainty about the future availability of an *abuna*, even babes in arms were admitted.[43]

The traditional garb of the deacon is a yellowish cape made of sheepskins, though on holidays the officiating deacons may be dressed in richly colored silk robes like the priests. The duties of the deacon—and they are accounted great and secret privileges—are to prepare the sacramental bread, fetch the holy water, and assist at the Mass (the performance of which normally requires two priests and three deacons).

On reaching puberty a deacon is no longer supposed to serve in the church, for fear that he will become "impure." At that time he may decide to prepare for the priesthood. For this two qualifications must be met. He must have completed his study of reading and, ideally, of *zēmā*, the chants that are intoned in the liturgy of the Mass. These matters he may learn from the older clergy during his service as a deacon, or from his father, who, in many cases, is a priest himself. Otherwise, he goes off in search of a master. He

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

builds a tiny thatch hut near the home of his tutor, wears ragged, unsheared sheepskins, and gets his meals by begging.* He lives thus for a year or two, until he has mastered the fourteen varieties of chants used in the various masses, and perhaps special chants like the *Praise of Mary* (*Weddāssē Māryām*) which are sung on holidays.

The other, and more important, qualification for the priesthood is marriage according to the law of the church. After a deacon has been married in the customary manner and lived with his wife for at least forty days, their marriage must be solemnized by the celebration of the Eucharist. Thereafter he may not divorce her or remarry if she dies.

With these conditions satisfied, the candidate for priesthood may travel to the *abuna* and be ordained. He acquires thereby the power to bind and to absolve, and is granted full knowledge of the mysteries of the *tābot*. The new priest attaches himself to a church, and is given his share of the monthly assignments for conducting the Mass. This is his main responsibility, though as he grows older he will also acquire confessants to whom he will give advice and assign penances.

Apart from these duties, the life of an Abyssinian priest in many ways resembles that of his lay neighbors. He plows his fields and harvests his crops. He may do business at the markets, or add to his income by weaving. Perhaps the chief difference in his manner of life is the habit of spending time in the "gate of peace," a little building near the church where the clergy assemble after services for hours of drinking *tallā* and idle conversation.

In reward for his services—and this is normally the chief inducement to become a priest—the priest is given a share of the revenues in kind brought in from lands owned and managed by the church. He may also be given some land owned by the church to cultivate for himself. In addition, he receives gifts in kind from his confessants periodically, is entitled to take part in the various feasts to which priests are regularly invited, and is likely to receive some bequest from time to time.*

The insignia of the priest are modest, but they suffice to inform the stranger that here is a man to be shown special respect: a white turban wrapped around the head and a cross carried in the hand, to be kissed by all comers. Older priests often carry a fly-whisk made of horsehair, and a wicker sun umbrella.

Though there are devout and kindly men among them, the Ethiopian priests have never been particularly noted for their moral qualities. Often they are ungenerous and scheming, and ready to exploit their position at the expense of the laity. They are poorly educated in their own tradition, stuttering

* A sheep, or at least a sheepskin—insurance that the Memorial Mass will be properly performed on the fortieth day after the donor's death.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

and misreading sacred texts in a language they have never understood. They are notorious drinkers, so much so that a modern Ethiopian novelist has one of his characters, a priest, ask: "If one stops drinking, what else is left in this world?"[44]

Nevertheless, the prestige of the priests was unassailable in Amhara culture. Whatever their personal life, they represented the value of ritual sanctity, which made it possible for the Mass to be performed in the local churches. So long as they had been duly ordained and did not break their lawful marriage bond, they were part of a sacred class. Combes and Tamisier remarked upon this in the 1830's:

> Despite all their vices, these priests manage to make themselves respected; when they pass along the roads, the faithful bow deeply to them, and in no matter what gathering they appear, everyone rises and hurries to kiss their hands.[45]

Privileged contact with the sacred symbols of the church—ordination by the sacrosanct *abuna*, exclusive access to the *tābot*, and officiation at the Eucharist—gave the priests an authority that was independent both of political dispensation and of personal accomplishment.

Other groups within the clergy have been highly esteemed for quite different reasons. Those who become monks carry great weight because they embody the virtue of ascetic piety. The *dabtarā*, on the other hand, are respected for their erudition.

Monks usually come from two kinds of background: unwed deacons desiring to spend their lives as monks, and priests whose wives have died. But previous ecclesiastical connection is not necessary for the monastic calling, nor is the ability to read required. The essential qualification is the willingness to renounce the world. The word for becoming a monk (*manaḳwasa*) means to renounce earthly things. A prospective monk may be of the sort described by one of Walker's informants:

> An old man who has married many wives and divorced them one by one, may say, "Henceforth it suffices me! Let the world remain lost to me! I am to turn my face to God!"[46]

In earlier times the monastic life was sought by men from all walks of life, including lords, soldiers, even emperors, in consequence of some grievous affliction, or perhaps a vow made in time of trouble, or excessive *Weltschmerz*.

Heads of monasteries have the jurisdiction to confer the monastic status. One who desires this status bequeathes his worldly possessions and goes through a ceremony in the church in which his body is declared dead. The symbol of the monastic state is a little cloth skullcap (*aṣkēma*). Once he has become a monk, an Ethiopian is a legal nonentity. This frees him from all

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

tax obligations and any debts he may have incurred, for which advantage many have become monks for other than spiritual motives.[47]

No specific duties or obligations are required of a monk. Abyssinian monks have spent their years in a variety of ways. One extreme is anchoritism. Many have become hermits, feeding only on roots and herbs, and have sought even greater self-mortification by such practices as standing for long periods in icy water or wearing iron girdles lined with points. Others have lived somewhat closer to human society, wandering about the country as mendicants or making the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Others have attached themselves, for shorter or longer periods, to monasteries, spending long periods in prayer and fasting and doing some humble work like collecting wood or, if formerly a priest, assisting at the Mass with the other priests. A few have proselytized in non-Christian areas. Some monks, on the other hand, have left the world only to rejoin it at a higher level. These become advisers to grandees or themselves serve as governors of districts.

Whatever the shortcomings of individual monks, the monastic calling as a whole has enjoyed the highest esteem in Ethiopia. Monks have exerted a great influence on the thinking and behavior of the people. Itinerant hermits have harangued the people to live more pious lives. The counsel of monks has been of help to rulers in time of trouble. The prophecies of monks have been influential in setting the pattern of hopes and fears about the future.

The role of the *dabtarā* is quite different. The *dabtarā*'s combination of functions is unusual—he is at once chorister, poet, dancer, herbologist, scribe, and wizard. It is also remarkable that so indispensable a functionary in the Ethiopian Church has no formal position in the church hierarchy.

With its characteristic forbearance toward human frailty, Amhara culture has established in the *dabtarā* a religious vocation in which special knowledge is required but holiness is not expected. The vocation is thus sought by those who do not care to be bound by the strict conditions of the priesthood, or by priests who have found these conditions too much to live with, so have been divorced or remarried. Recruitment into the role is informal: there are no rites of ordination, nor is there any particular point at which a man becomes or ceases to be a *dabtarā*.

Becoming a *dabtarā* mainly entails a course of study beyond that minimal level required for the priests. The full course of traditional studies includes the vast corpus of religious chants; *āquāquām* ("religious dance"); Ge'ez grammar and *qenē;* and study of some two dozen religious books. Mastery of the entire curriculum, which takes at least twenty to thirty years according to traditional methods of pedagogy, is rarely accomplished. In addition the student acquires other knowledge sub rosa from private tutors: knowledge of writing, preparation of magic formulae, and the use of herbs.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

793 The *dabtarā*'s way of life is more variable than that of the monk, his possibilities for income more diverse than those of the priest. He may be attached to a church as a chorister and receive a share of the church's revenues, as do the priests. Or he may donate his services to the church and earn his living [212] by secular employment. He may work as a scribe at the court of a king or nobleman. He may spend most of his time teaching, gaining support from some large church or monastery. Like many priests he may cultivate land. [434] In any case, he is likely to derive some income from the sale of amulets and from medical therapies. Some *dabtarā* are even said to have wandered about the country as hunters, performing magical services for clients as they go.

Dabtarā are not set off from the populace by special insignia. Some wind [292] a turban around their heads, as do many priests; but others may dress like ordinary peasants. If holding more prestigious posts they may be seen with fly-whisks or wearing a *burnos*. But they are known by the people, who fear [788] and respect them. They are feared because of their magical powers, which are believed capable of rendering bullets harmless and turning *injarā* to dust. [554] They are respected because of their learning, for they are the only educated status group in traditional Amhara society. If the commoner's relatively [195] impulsive *manner* of speaking is contrasted with the quiet reserve of the nobility, his relatively simple *language* is contrasted with that of the *dabtarā*, who is noted for a studied and circumspect use of language (*qāla-dabtarā*) and for larding his Amharic with literary (i.e., Ge'ez) expressions (*ya-dabtarā amarïñña*).

793 554 183 In the case of the religious elite, then, status is in all cases achieved. While there is a natural tendency for sons of priests and *dabtarā* to follow their fathers' example, they arrive at the status in question only by fulfilling the same norms that are applied to the sons of laymen. These norms, however, differ among the different groups within the clergy. Investiture by an authority emanating from the seat of religious charisma, the Alexandrine Patriarchate, and the related ritual requirement of marriage with Communion, were the basis of priestly status, almost irrespective of the personal attainments of the candidate. Personal attainments were *all* that mattered, on the other [792] hand, in the case of monk and *dabtarā*, but they differed radically for the two statuses.

793 792 554 The qualifications and characters of monks and *dabtarā* are almost diametrically opposed. The monastic state is entered only by means of a sacred rite; the *dabtarā* is in no way ordained, and might even be a "defrocked" priest. The monk's life is normally given to sensual renunciation; the *dabtarā* is normally an acknowledged sensualist (as appears, for example, in the proverb *ḳo-mesā ya-taleye dabtarā / yādargāl serā* ["a *dabtarā* who is kept from lunch / will work intrigues"][48] and in stories which celebrate the *dabtarā*'s use of his knowledge for private erotic ends). In the monk the virtue

11:Levine Z-4.5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

of ascetic piety is stressed at the expense of knowledge. The monk need not even know how to read, though if a lifelong monk he is likely to have devoted much time to traditional studies. The *dabtarā*, by contrast, lives by his lore and his learning. At his best, the Abyssinian monk conveys a real sense of spiritual purity, of profound mystical bearing, of an utterly mild manner. The *dabtarā*, at his best, is a subtle conversationalist and an operator of wondrous effects.*

Thus, while the status of members of the old nobility was a compound resultant of simultaneously operating criteria—family and region, royal favor and accumulated power—the several criteria relevant to the status of the clergy operated more or less independently. This made the religious elite a more differentiated stratum.

This statement need be qualified only by the fact that, in addition to the considerations of ritual purity, ascetic piety, and traditional learning, a fourth factor influenced the status of the clergy, namely, royal favor as expressed in appointments to the high ecclesiastical offices. This factor crosscut the others, for such favor was dispensed to members of all three status groups. The *eçhagē* was always a monk; the *aqābē sa'āt* would seem to have been a *dabtarā;* the post of *alaqā* could be given to members of all three groups.

Just how these types of local clergy were related to the clergy at the national level in the traditional order is a question that is difficult to answer. In any case, it is likely that there were conflicts among their representatives in the competition for royal favor. In the fourteenth century, the ecclesiastics of the royal entourage included only secular clergy, and their deportment was sharply criticized by Eçhagē Fileppos, who charged that "those who live in the dwelling of the Sovereign, go about proudly in subtle raiment and with ornaments of gold and silver—perishables—and are very arrogant."[49] However, once Zar'a Yā'qob had established the custom of bringing members of the convent of Dabra Libānos to the court, the monastic order was always well represented in the royal entourage as well. In the present period one sometimes hears of competition among the different groups for influence in

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* The association of impious properties with the main representative of traditional religious learning may be seen as an expression of the Abyssinian's ambivalence toward knowledge as such. The whole tenor of Ethiopian Orthodox religion runs counter to ratiocination and inquiry. It stresses mystery and discourages curiosity with tales like that of the man who tried to probe the mystery of the Trinity and was swallowed up by the earth—a tale commonly told to students who are learning to read. For this reason Orthodox students have frequently been quite upset by the rational theodicy taught by the Jesuit fathers at the University College.

As observed in the previous chapter, moreover, it was traditionally believed that too much learning results in madness, a belief no doubt based on the fact that older church students often drink a certain medicine to quicken their mental faculties, which sometimes deranges them (as the author has witnessed). The *dabtarā*, for their part, would seem to have thrived on this belief, benefiting from the exclusive powers and privileges gained from their esoteric knowledge.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

the contemporary church hierarchy, the *dabtarā* stressing their special intellectual qualification for high positions, the monks their greater piety.

The Traditional Balance

Whatever the internal fragmentation of the church—which was compounded by regionally based doctrinal controversies—it may for the moment be considered as a unified estate vis-à-vis the secular powers. This permits us to raise the question of the integration of politico-military and religious elites in traditional Abyssinian society, a question that may be discussed in terms of two relationships: that between the values represented by the two elites, and that between the interests of their respective institutions.

The social teachings of the Ethiopian Church were couched in terms of practical justice, not universal love. Thus the pacifistic strain in Christianity barely made itself felt. The priests, to be sure, were forbidden to shed blood, animal or human; but this is more in the nature of a necessity for the maintenance of ritual purity than a symbol of moral principle. They went along willingly to the battlefield in ceremonial capacity. In fact, comments d'Abbadie, most of them would reject the interdiction of their taking part in military expeditions as a denial of their rights.[50]

Far from opposing warfare, Ethiopian Christianity served rather as an inspiration and justification for wars; since much of the fighting was directed against Muslim, Judaic, or pagan peoples, the warfare took on something of a crusading tone. As for internecine war, it was commonly justified in terms of *lex talionis*, a religiously sanctioned punishment for the sins of the enemy. In this respect, then, the two elites gave impressive support to each other. The warlords were serving the church by fighting the heathen. The fate of their military expeditions, on the other hand, was assisted by the prayers of the accompanying clergy. This reciprocal dependence was symbolized by the custom of taking some *tābot* along with the army to the battlefield, and by the custom of "greeting" the church as the first thing a warrior does when he returns home.

The values of warfare and religion were further harmonized by the symbolism of the emperor, Lion of Judah. The emperor combined in his person the figures of indomitable warlord and devout—and divinely guided—Christian. This combination was an integral part of the self-image projected by many emperors, as reflected, for example, in the identification with Constantine the Great manifested by Zar'a Yā'qob and Eskender (1478-94) in their choice of throne name, and by Tēwodros II in his coronation speech.

With regard to civil policy, moreover, the nobility and clergy were in basic accord. Both groups felt a special responsibility for adjudicating disputes. Both felt that their superior status entitled them to receive substantial amounts of rent and revenues from lands granted them by the king, and to

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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[P.194-8]

Fig. 27.—*A dance*

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Fig. 28.—*Group of Jaburá*

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Fig. 29.—*An old priest*

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

innumerable gifts and services from the rank and file of the peasantry. Differences normally arose only when the secular powers deviated from what were generally the established norms. Thus, certain extremes of exploitation were on occasion strongly condemned by the clergy—usually the monks—as were certain transgressions of Christian custom by the secular powers, including at times the emperor himself. Amda Ṣeyon (1314–44), for example, was publicly rebuked, early in his reign, for having seduced one of his father's concubines and two of his own sisters. More generally, the clergy tended to react against flagrant misbehavior on the part of the military—such as looting the homes of those giving them quarter, or violating the right of asylum.

The extent to which the religious and secular powers stood in economic conflict seems to have depended largely on the amount of land available at any given time. Both groups were interested in the acquisition of rights to land revenues. The rights of the church to land are anchored in a traditional agreement, attributed to Yekuno Amlāk (1270–85), according to which the church was to receive one-third of the land in the realm. It is clear that the holdings of the church grew progressively larger from that time to the sixteenth century. With the subsequent diminution of Abyssinian territory and related social disorganization, the church's claim to its lands was not so scrupulously respected. Thus, Barradas observed that the emperors of the seventeenth century were as anxious to regain lands from the church for distribution to their soldiers as those of previous centuries had been generous in presenting them, while Takla Hāymānot decreed in 1771 that "all lands and villages, which are now or have been given to the Abuna by the King, shall revert to the King's own use."[61] Tēwodros, too, was anxious to recapture as much land as he could from the church. Later in the nineteenth century, however, as Menelik carried out his great territorial expansion, the church systematically acquired one-fourth of all lands in the annexed areas.

In general, it may be said that the clergy and nobility worked to further each other's interests. The nobility supported the clergy by giving endowments to churches and monasteries, setting up churches in newly conquered lands, and observing religious ceremonies as state functions. The clergy, in turn, served secular authority by providing a communications network for relaying and supporting official policies, excommunicating enemies, and providing counsel and morale in connection with military expeditions. Altogether, there was an easy commerce between the two elites. They felt common cause in their responsibilities and privileges vis-à-vis the masses. Occasionally there was even an exchange of personnel, when warlords ended their careers by becoming monks, or clerics acceded to high civil positions, like the Rās of Angot, for example, who in Alvares' time was an ordained priest.

When expectations of mutual support were not satisfied, however, conflict

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

792 did erupt between the secular and religious powers. In that event both groups
793 had recourse to powerful weapons: the former, violence; the latter, excom-
643 munication. The history of Ethiopia records numerous instances of the flog-
578 ging or execution of clergy by secular authorities. The action of Fāsiladas
[175] (1632-67), who reportedly "caused seven thousand priests to be thrown head-long from the top of the mountain Balbau for having revolted against him,"[62] would represent but one of the more extreme instances of such violent retribution. Short of violence, the kings at least had other means at their disposal for controlling the clergy: the power to withhold benefices, the right to imprison church officials, the final authority on doctrinal questions, and the ability to block a united front on the part of the clergy by pitting high church officials against each other.

792 On the other hand, infringement on the rights of churches and monasteries,
793 gross civil injustice, or radical departure from religious tradition could on
578 occasion evoke surprisingly effective retaliation by the clergy. D'Abbadie provides some extremely illuminating passages on this matter, from which the following have been extracted:

> More than once have I been present at debates of this nature; I have seen these men of the church, weak and without arms amidst men of war, pleading in the name of the law, indicting the menacing covetousness of the surrounding soldiery, invoking eloquently reprobation against their powerful adversaries, and leading them to disavow themselves that force which constituted their pride. . . .
>
> In the case of an open violation of an asylum, the regular clergy got aroused; the most venerable monks abandoned their solitude, assembled the pariah clergy, went into the camps, and generally they obtained justice. When the real culprit was the Dajāzmītch, they brought him to repentance, or else excommunicated him, threatened his servants with anathema if they continued to serve him, put the province under interdict and, aided by the monks of the neighboring provinces, stirred up national reprobation against him.[63]

792 The clergy had other resources which it could employ against the emperor
793 himself. It could influence royal policy through highly placed advisers.
578 Through the *abuna* it could exact certain promises from a prospective em-
643 peror as a condition of coronation. Perhaps most important, the clergy could, through its hold over public opinion, turn the populace against the sovereign. As we have seen, this power proved decisive in the encounters between church and monarch in the reigns of Za Dengel and Susneyos, and contributed significantly to the downfall of Tēwodros and Līj Iyāsu.

643 While therefore the emperor may well have been "supreme in all causes,
792 ecclesiastical and civil," he was far from being the sole, or even the decisive,
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11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

source of the influence enjoyed by the clergy. The latter constituted a largely autonomous status group which no emperor could afford to antagonize indefinitely. The attempt to build a more powerful central government and introduce cultural reforms thus required some alteration of their independent status as well as that of the old nobility.

THE FEUDAL ORDER IN TRANSITION

The Decline of the Old Nobility

It must always have been the policy of the Ethiopian emperors, except for those few who did not relish the political side of their office, to seek to maximize their control over the regional nobility. They did this, we have seen, either by granting land, power, and rank to men who were completely dependent on them, or else by controlling, through military and diplomatic means, those lords whose birthright and regional strength gave them strong claims to their positions.

During the past century, however, the idea of subordinating regional nobles to imperial control has come to be conceived more radically and has become the core of a slowly emerging ideal of a modern nation-state. Some such vision was certainly behind the tortuous career of Tēwodros II, whose policy was a reaction against the desperate disunity which the Age of the Princes brought to Abyssinia and to the growing threat from foreign powers. In Plowden's official report to the British government in 1855, he described Tēwodros' work as follows:

> The arduous task of breaking the power of the great feudal chiefs—a task achieved in Europe only during the reigns of many consecutive kings—he has commenced by chaining almost all who were dangerous, avowing his intention of liberating them when his power shall be consolidated. He has placed soldiers of the different provinces under the command of his own trusty followers, to whom he has given high titles, but no power to judge or punish: thus, in fact, creating generals in place of feudal chieftains, more proud of their birth than of their monarch, and organising a new nobility—a legion of honour dependent on himself, and chosen specially for their daring and fidelity.[84]

The task of displacing the great feudal chiefs proved to be scarcely less arduous in Ethiopia than in Europe, however. Tēwodros' high hopes were shattered against the opposing forces of regional ambitions and clerical disaffection. The national unity he won through conquest and reform did not survive to the end of his reign.

Yohānnes IV (1871–89) likewise aimed at uniting the nation, but was distracted from serious internal reform by the need to fight off the encroach-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

directed peasantry, and suffer the consequences, no dynamic program of agricultural and social development can take place in Abyssinian areas that does not enlist the active cooperation of the local *bälābbät* and *shum*.*

The Decline of the Clergy

Although the church was instrumental in bringing Rās Tafari to power—by relieving the nobles of their oath of allegiance to Lǐjj Iyāsu—it was as a whole not sympathetic to his policy once he began to rule. Foremost champions of tradition, the clergy viewed with suspicion Rās Tafari's interest in modern education and other reforms. So pronounced was their conservatism that his weekly *Berhānennā Salām* found it newsworthy to report the fact that the clergy of one important provincial church were actually reading the Addis Ababa newspaper each week.[67] He was wise to act gingerly at first, limiting ecclesiastical reform to such matters as publishing religious texts in Ge'ez and Amharic, and encouraging the work of foreign missionaries.

In the past three decades, however, changes of many sorts have had the effect of reducing the degree of independent authority which the clergy traditionally enjoyed. These changes included the achievement of independence from the Alexandrian Patriarchate; the weakening of the church under the Italian occupation; subjection of church administration to the central government; and competition from the secular government schools.

Rās Tafari initiated the policy of seeking independence from Alexandria in 1929, when he secured the investiture of five Ethiopian bishops. This gave indigenous clergy, for the first time, the right to ordain priests and deacons, although they remained subordinate to the Egyptian archbishop. In 1950 an Ethiopian bishop, the *eṭṭegē*, was consecrated as archbishop; and in 1958, culminating Haile Selassie's patient and skillful negotiations, complete autonomy from Alexandria was achieved.

The attainment of ecclesiastical independence has heightened the prestige of national church officials in Ethiopia. It has brought about a re-organization of the national church hierarchy, in which fifteen bishops now hold office, one for each of the fourteen provinces, and one in Jerusalem. At the same time it has reduced the effective freedom of the clergy as a separate status group. Deprived of the external source of legitimacy which the Egyptian *abuna* formerly provided, the clergy are now entirely subordinated to the power of the Emperor. This condition was formally articulated in the Constitution of 1955, which made the election and appointment of archbishops and bishops

* A potentially significant medium of communication between them and the central government is the Chamber of Deputies, which since 1957 has brought popularly elected notables from the provinces to Addis Ababa.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

"subject to the approval of the Emperor" and gave him "the right to promulgate the decrees, edicts, and public regulations of the Church, except those concerning monastic life and other spiritual administrations."

The general position of the church had already been weakened by the events of the Italian occupation. Italian policy resulted in the destruction of many church buildings and the massacre of numerous monks, including those of the hallowed monastery of Dabra Libānos. Of the national leaders, the Egyptian *abuna* was out of the country from 1937 on; two of the bishops were put to death, including the much venerated martyr, Abuna Pēṭros;* and the remaining two compounded the demoralization by openly supporting the invaders. One of these went so far as to anathematize resistance fighters and forbade Ethiopian priests to give Christian burial to those who died as patriots. In some areas, moreover, it is said that the local clergy lost much prestige by welcoming the invader with open arms.

Haile Selassie thus had a much stronger hand in his dealings with the clergy when he returned from exile in 1941. The next year he issued a decree which sharply restricted the perquisites of the local clergy. Their landed properties were no longer tax free, but now carried the obligation to pay taxes at the normal rate into a central church treasury. The church was deprived of temporal jurisdiction over its ordained and lay members, including the authority to inflict fines, and was denied the right to corvée labor from peasants living on their lands. (In practice these latter restrictions of authority are frequently ignored in the provinces.)

The development of a nationwide system of government schools, finally, has broken the clergy's monopoly of educational facilities. Wherever government schools have invaded traditional Abyssinian regions, the clergy tend to be defensive and resentful. The specific issues have been the decreased prestige of certain traditional religious subjects, which are not taught in these schools, and the comparatively lower income of church teachers. Thus, a full-time teacher of reading attached to a monastery may receive Eth$15 a month from the central church treasury, whereas a government school teacher in the same area teaching the same subject may earn Eth$150 a month.

Despite all these blows, the clergy still retain much the same prestige as ever in the provinces. Their influence over public opinion is considerable, and has been a major factor in discouraging families in traditional Christian areas like Manz from sending their children to government schools.† Despite

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* A statue of Abuna Pēṭros has been raised in the center of Addis Ababa. His fate has been celebrated in the verse drama by Makonnen Endālkāchaw, *Ye-dam Demṭs*, translated into English as *The Voice of Blood* by Endālkāchaw Makonnen.

† When the Ethiopian government is ready to inaugurate a major program of provincial education, it should not prove difficult to overcome this opposition. A number of provincial priests, with whom the author has discussed this matter, have signified their willingness to serve as

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

recent restrictions on their income, it remains considerable. It is conservatively estimated that they possess at least fifteen per cent of the arable land in Ethiopia, and their general inertia with regard to agricultural reform remains a significant conservative factor.

In the modernizing sector, the position of the clergy has been much more vulnerable. The traditional forms of erudition and piety seem to bear little relevance to the intellectual and moral needs of the modernizing elements. The church's reputation for hostility to change further alienates them from it. But it is by no means certain that the church's position will only decline with the passage of time. Ethiopia will be profoundly susceptible to the appeal of traditional revivalist sentiment as the strains attendant on modernization increase; and by its publication of two monthlies, since 1947, the church has already shown, albeit in a limited way, its capacity to employ modern media for traditionalist purposes. On the other hand, if the tiny band of Western-educated church leaders succeed in promoting some degree of modernization in the church, through institutions like the Theological School and the Orthodox Students Association, the clergy may yet play a constructive part in the social and moral life of transitional Ethiopia. It remains to be seen whether its leadership will be effective enough to move the traditionalist clergy to make those adjustments necessary for survival as a respected status group in the modernizing sector.

The New Men of Power

After curbing the independent power of the *makuānnent*, Haile Selassie was careful to prevent others from taking their place in the political structure, determined as he was to consolidate in his own hand all the powers they once wielded. As a result of his centralization of government in Addis Ababa, however, a new group of men have gained pre-eminent status at the national level. We may call this group the "new nobility": "new" because of their development of an urban style of life, and because their influence as an elite is largely directed to the modernizing infrastructure, and "nobility" because of their perpetuation of the traditional hierarchical image of a superior and privileged status group. The core of this status group consists of government officials with the ranks of minister, vice-minister, and assistant minister, who function essentially as a personal administrative staff for the monarch.

As observed above, Tēwodros clearly saw the need for creating a new class of nobles, freed from regional interests and acting solely according to the

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elementary instructors in the government schools, and at salaries much lower than the better trained Ministry teachers. The presence of just one or two priests in these schools would eliminate the traditionalist opposition to them that is now so strong. The situation may be compared to that in Ceylon, where the opposition of Buddhist monks to government schools was eliminated by incorporating them as teachers in those schools.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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FIG. 30.—*A widower who has become a monk*

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FIG. 31.—*A group of clergy*

[P. 206-A]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

live near the same master, they divide up the neighboring countryside to avoid duplication in their begging.

The ordained clergy are themselves given to begging, for items ranging from contributions to the local church to petty personal effects. High-ranking visitors to their locale are customarily made the objects of such solicitations. Another type of begging is practiced by the minstrels who wander about the country with their one-stringed fiddles and fecund wit, coaxing contributions from any audience they can capture. In addition to these there are numerous professional beggars—the maimed, the diseased, and the poverty-stricken—who attach themselves to a well-attended church or monastery if they are unable to travel. The *lälibalä* is a notable type within this category of mendicants.[28]

In addition to honoring the periodic appeals of beggars, "big men" are supposed to provide yearly feasts (*gïber*) at which beggars of all the above descriptions are fed. In all these instances, the solicitation and bestowal of charity contributes a solidaristic element to the network of personal relations among the Amhara.

The foregoing analysis of forms of interaction among the Amhara has been undertaken in order to gain material for generalizing about a psychological disposition. Our unspoken, tautological assumption has been that the ways in which individuals typically relate to social objects (i.e., other persons and collectivities) represent the sociologically relevant aspects of their psychology. Egoism and solidarism have been used here as concepts for depicting one dimension of "social character," using this term in the specific sense of comprising those aspects of personality which are both socially shared and constitutive of those actions that are oriented to social objects. We may now attempt to summarize the preceding discussion with the following definition of Amhara social character as it relates to the concept of individualism: The Amhara is primarily disposed to structure interaction in terms of self-assertion, dissension, and distrust, and to be indifferent to the concept of civil community. At the same time this egoistic orientation is blended with a warm and kindly sense of sociability, an occasional mood of generosity, and a refined sensibility regarding differences in status and the readiness to pay deference accordingly.

INDEPENDENCE VERSUS CONSTRAINT

In the previous section we considered the nature of the individual's orientation toward others and toward collectivities in Amhara society. Our question now is the converse: what order of demands is made upon individuals by the institutions of that society? Specifically, we shall be concerned primarily with the degree to which the norms which govern institutional roles are

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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are balanced by a fairly permissive mode of organization. For the clergy, the constraints are heavier; the fasting requirements are increased, and the priesthood involves, as we have seen, strict marital fidelity. On the other hand, the individualistic organization of the clergy is most striking.

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This individualism is conspicuous already in the church schools, which are organized not on a class basis but in a series of master-pupil relations. Students begin their courses of study whenever they arrive at the residence of the master, and proceed each at his own pace. The master spends the bulk of his time with more advanced students, who in turn are used to instruct the less advanced. The pupils are very much on their own, uncontrolled either by their families, with whom they no longer reside, nor by any formal institution. The same is true of the masters, who are not subjected to any sort of outside controls. Indeed, each teacher tends to develop his own unique method of teaching, regarding it as something of a personal monopoly.[24]

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The ministrating clergy are likewise free from controls emanating from a broad ecclesiastical organization. Each parish church functions autonomously under the direction of a head (*alaqā*) chosen by the local clergy. (Heads of the most important churches have traditionally been appointed by the emperor.) The obligations of the priesthood are not very great. The chief duty of the priest is to take his turn in performing the Mass. His pastoral services are limited to occasional visits with his particular confessants, from whom he expects to receive regular rewards of food and drink. Otherwise, his life is much the same as that of his lay neighbors.

The role of the *dabtarā*, as we have seen, is still more flexible. *Dabtarā* who are associated with a parish church are expected to take their turns singing hymns and composing *qenē* in the outer ring of the church; but otherwise they exist as free entrepreneurs, and they need not be so attached unless they so desire.

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The individualistic organization of the Ethiopian Church is most striking, perhaps, in the case of the monks, especially when compared with Christian monastic orders in the Western world. Ethiopian monks are bound by nothing other than the original conditions for assuming the role, namely, renouncing family ties and worldly possessions. The monk need not enter a monastery; he may continue to live in his old home or may take to the woods as a hermit. If he does go to live at a monastery, his life is not radically changed. The Ethiopian monastery is not an organized community, but a sacred place—the site of a large and important church, in the vicinity of which live numbers of individual monks. The monk comes and goes as he wishes, prays whenever he wants, and may live free of any obligations toward his fellow monastics and toward the rest of the society.*

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* There are, however, some monasteries where a more organized and disciplined regime may be found.

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[For information on priests as medical practitioners, see category 116, pp. xvii-xix, 11, 29, 70, 73, 84, 87-96, 107-108, 112-113, 139-159, 166-181, 185-195, and 198-236.]

632
621 A Gondar Ward. Gabrael sebeka lies on Gondar's eastern flank, and is typical of those wards which are not given over entirely to talla sellers or tradesmen. [241] Until liberation, it was occupied by risteñas and cul- [423] tivators of timene and church lands (riym). During the [198] last three decades, the ward's character changed greatly, [795] as domiciles for out-landers were built on its fields, [342] and many of its erstwhile peasants took up employment in [463] the town. Today, the ward contains 198 residents. Ten [161] of its forty-four households are headed by Gondar-born 632 people; of these, five were born in Gabrael sebeka it- 621 self. The remaining household heads are a) Amhara from 592 other parts of Begemder (sixteen households), from Gojam (five households), and from Wollo (five households); b) Tigreans (three households); c) local Agaw (two households); d) Shoans (four households); and e) Sankella (one household). On the average, the ward's adult residents who were not born in Gondar have lived fifteen [241] years in this sebeka. With the exception of three house- [793] holds which still depend exclusively on farming, and [463] two local priests (sharing the Mass with priests residing in an adjacent ward), the ward's residents are supported by occupations which depend upon daily contact with [463] people of many other sebekas. In brief, seven household heads are policemen, thirteen hold other government employment, five work as zibañas, eight as wood cutters,